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THE WHOLE

WORKS

OF THE REVEREND

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Mr. JOHN FLAVEL,

Late MINISTER of the GOSPEL at *Dartmouth* in *Devon*.

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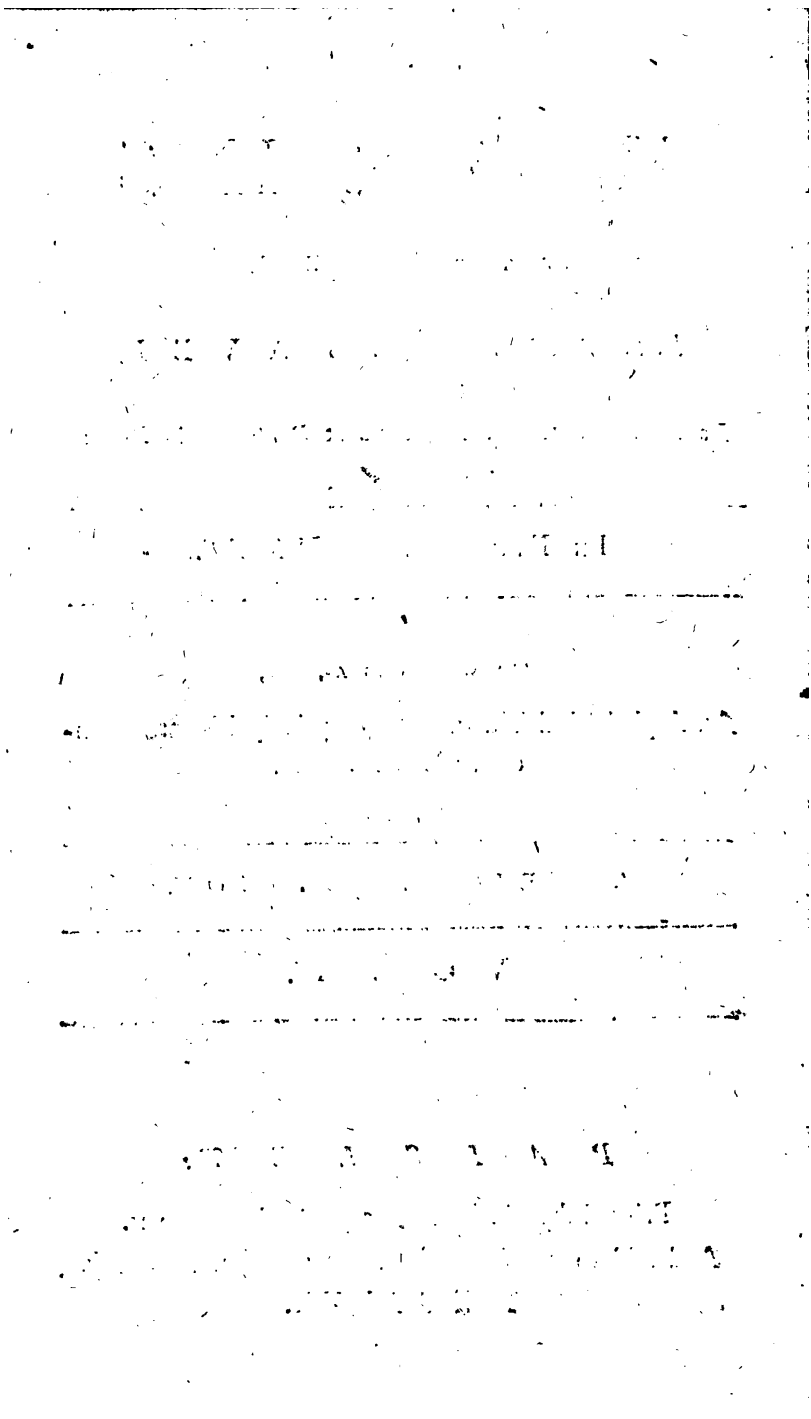

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A

PRACTICAL TREATISE OF FEAR.

Wherein the various *kinds*, *uſes*, *cauſes*, *effects* and *remedies* thereof are diſtinctly opened and preſcribed, for the relief and encouragement of all thoſe that fear God in theſe doubtful and diſtracting times.

To the Right Worſhipful Sir JOHN HARTOP, *Knight and Baronet.*

SIR,

AMONG all the creatures God hath made (devils only excepted) man is the moſt apt and able to be his own tormentor; and of all the ſcourges with which he laſheth and afflicteth both his mind and body, none is found ſo cruel and intolerable as *his own fears*. The worſe the times are like to be, the more need the mind hath of ſuccour and encouragement, to confirm and fortify it for hard encounters; but from the worſt proſpect, *fear* inflicts the deepeſt and moſt dangerous wounds upon the mind of man, cutting the very nerves of its paſſive fortitude and bearing ability.

The grief we ſuffer from evil felt, would be light, and eaſy, were it not incenſed by *fear*; reaſon would do much, and religion more, to demulce and lenify our ſorrows, did not *fear* betray the ſuccours of both. And it is from *things to come* that this proſpecting creature raiſeth up to himſelf vaſt hopes and fears: if he have a fair and encouraging proſpect of ſerene and proſperous days, from the *ſcheme*, and poſition of ſecond cauſes, *hope* immediately fills his heart with chearfulneſs, and diſplays the ſignals of it in his very face, anſwerable to that fair, benign aſpect of things: but if the face of things to come, be threatening and inauſpicious, *fear* gains the aſcendant over the mind; an unmanly, and unchriſtian faintneſs pervades it, and, among the many other miſchiefs it inflicts, this is not the leaſt, that it brings the evil of *to-morrow*

upon *to-day*, and so makes the duties of to-day wholly unserviceable to the evils of to-morrow; which is as much as if a man having an intricate, and difficult business cut out for the next day, which requires the utmost intention, both of his mind and body, and (haply) might be prosperously managed, if both were duely prepared, should lie, all the night, restless and disquieted about the event, torturing and spending himself with his own presaging fears, so that when the day is come, and the business calls for him, his strength is no way equal to the burden of it, but he faints, and fails under it.

There is indeed an excellent use that God makes of our fears, to stimulate our slothful hearts, to greater vigilance and preparation for evils; and there is a mischievous use Satan makes of our fears, to cast us under despondency and unbecoming pusillanimity: and I reckon it one of the greatest difficulties of religion, to cut, by a thread, here, and so to manage ourselves under threatning or doubtful providences, as to be touched with so much sense of those approaching evils, as may prepare us to bear them; and yet to enjoy that constancy and firmness of mind, in the worst times, that may answer the excellent principles we are professedly governed by.

These last times are certainly the most perilous times; great things are yet to be acted upon the *stage* of this world, before it be taken down; and the *scena antepenultima*, latter-end, I say not the last, will be a *tragedy*. There is an *ultima clades adhuc metuenda*, a dismal slaughter of the witnesses of Christ yet to be expected: the last bite of the cruel beast will be deadly, and if we flatter not ourselves, all things seem to be disposing themselves in the course of providence towards it.

But, Sir, If our union with Christ be sure in itself, and sure to us also; if faith give us the daily visions and praelibations of the world to come, what well-composed spectators shall we be of these tragedies! Let things be tossed *fusque, deque*, and the mountains cast into the midst of the sea, yet then
Psal. xlvi. the assured Christian may sing his song upon *Alamoth*, A song composed for God's hidden ones. This so poiseth and steddies the mind, that we may enjoy the comfort and tranquillity of a resigned will, when others are at their wit's end.

With design to promote this blessed frame, in my own and others hearts, in these frightful times, I meditated, and now publish this small tract, to which a dear friend (from whom I have often had the fair *idea* and character of your excellent spirit) hath occasioned the prefixing of your worthy name; I beg

pardon for such an unusual presumption, as also your charity in censuring the faults that will appear in it, when it shall come under so exact and judicious an eye; it may be useful, tho' it be not elegant; its seasonableness is its best commendation, and its aim better than its performance. As for you, Sir, I hope faith hath really placed your soul in that serene and happy station where Seneca fancied moral virtue to have placed a good man, *Fatendum est, cacumine Olympi constitutus, supra ventos et procellas, et omnes res humanas:* Above the storms and tempests of this unquiet and distracting world. But there are many gracious persons at this day labouring under their own fears, and whose hearts are ready to fail with looking for those things that are coming to try them that dwell upon the earth; and possibly somewhat of relief may be administred to many such, by this discourse; some bivious and staggering souls may be established; some discouraged and fainting spirits may be revived; some doubts may be dissolved that have long perplexed gracious hearts. Whatever use it may be of to any, I humbly call in the aid of your prayers to my own, for a special blessing upon it, and remain, Sir,

Yours to honour, love, and serve you,

JOHN FLAVEL.

* *

Isa. viii. 12, 13, *and part of* ver. 14.

Ver. 12. *Say ye not, A confederacy to all them to whom this people shall say a confederacy; neither fear ye* [*their fear*] *nor be afraid.* 13. *Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread;* 14. *And he shall be for a sanctuary.*——

CHAP. I.

Wherein the text, and context, are opened, the doctrines propounded, and the general method stated.

THere is no more diversity found in the outward features, than in the inward tempers and dispositions of men; some are as timorous as hares, and start at every sound, or yelp of a dog; others are bold as lions, and can face dangers with-

out trembling; ſome fear more than they ought, and ſome before they ought, and others when they ought not at all. The carnal perſon fears man, not God; the ſtrong Chriſtian fears God, not man; the weak Chriſtian fears man too much, and God too little.

There is a fear which is the effect of ſin, ſpringing from guilt, and hurrying the ſoul into more guilt; and there is a fear which is the effect of grace, ſpringing from our love to God, and his intereſt, and driving the ſoul to God in the way of duty. The leſs fear any man hath, the more happineſs, except it be of that fear which is our happineſs, and our excellency.

It cannot be ſaid of any man, as it is ſaid of Leviathan, Job xli. 33. that he is made without fear; thoſe that have moſt fortitude, are not without ſome fears; and when the church is in the ſtorms of perſecution, and almoſt covered with the waves, the ſtouteſt paſſengers in it may ſuffer as much from this boiſterous paſſion within, as from the ſtorm without; and all for want of thoroughly believing, or not ſeaſonably remembering that the Lord high admiral of all the ocean, and commander of all the winds, is on board the ſhip, to ſteer, and to preſerve it in the ſtorm.

A pregnant inſtance hereof, is furniſhed to our hands, in this context, where you find the beſt men trembling in expectation of the worſt events both on the church in general, and themſelves in particular. "Their hearts were moved like the trees of "the wood ſhaken with the wind," chap. vii. 2.

And, indeed, if their dangers were to be meaſured by ſenſe only, their fears were not above the value of the cauſe, yea, their danger ſeemed to exceed their fears; for it was the invaſion of a foreign, and cruel enemy, even the Aſſyrian, who were to break in upon them, like a breach of the ſea, and overflow the land of Immanuel. Ver. 7. "The Lord bringeth up upon them "the waters of the river, ſtrong and many; even the king of "Aſſyria, and all his glory, and he ſhall come up over all his "channels, and go over all his banks." And as the 7th verſe reſembles the enemy to waters, which quickly drown the country into which they break, ſo the 8th verſe tells you, how far they ſhould prevail, and how near it ſhould come to a general, and total ruin. "He ſhall paſs through Judah, he ſhall overflow, "and go over; he ſhall reach even to the neck, and the ſtretching out of his wings ſhall fill the breadth of thy land, O Im"manuel." All the body ſhould be under water, except the capital city, which remained above water.

Having thus deſcribed the power, and ſucceſs of the invading

enemy, in the 9th, and 10th verses, he derides their plots, and combinations, assuring them, that although God, for just and holy ends, would permit them, for a time, to afflict his people; yet the issue of all their councils, and cruelties, should recoil upon themselves, and end in their own ruin and confusion.

And thereupon Isaiah is commanded to encourage the feeble, and trembling hearts of such as feared God, in those distracted, and frightful times, Ver. 11, 12, 13. "The Lord spake unto me "with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk "in the way of this people, saying, Say ye not a confederacy," &c.

God speaking to the prophet by a strong hand, imports, the strong, and mighty impression that was made upon his heart, by the spirit of prophecy; wherein the Lord did, as it were, lay his hand upon him, as a man doth upon one to whom he is about to impart some special secret in a familiar way, *q. d.* Come hither, Isaiah, (drawing him to him at the same instant, with a friendly hand) take deep notice of what I am now to give thee in charge, both with respect to thyself, and my elect people that follow thee; "Say not you a confederacy to all them "to whom this people shall say a confederacy," *(i. e.)* let not these frightful tidings work upon you as they do upon Ahaz, and the common multitude with him, who are so terrified, and scared, with the approaching dangers, that all their councils, thoughts, and studies, are taken up in preventing it, by making a confederacy, or league, with the Assyrian; Hos. v. 13. or if that cannot be, then with some foreign power, that may secure them against the Assyrian: but their eyes are not at all to me for protection and deliverance; they expect more from Egypt, than from heaven; from a broken reed, than from the rock of ages. Fear not you their fear; their fear drives them from God to the creature; it first distracts them, and then ensnares them.

But, on the contrary, see that thou, and all the faithful in the land with thee, do sanctify me in your hearts, and make me your fear, and your dread, *(i. e.)* rely upon me, by faith, in this day of trouble, and see that you give me the glory of my wisdom, power, and faithfulness, by relying intirely upon those my attributes engaged for you in so many tried promises; and do not betake yourselves to such sinful, and vain shifts, as those do, that have no interest in me, nor experience of me. This is the general scope, and design of the text, wherein, more particularly, you have,

1. An evil practice prohibited.
2. An effectual remedy prescribed.
3. A singular encouragement to apply that remedy.

1. An evil practice prohibited, "Fear not their fear, neither "be afraid." This is that sinful principle, which was but too apt to incline them to do as others did, to wit, to say a confederacy. Sinful fears are apt to drive the best men into sinful compliances, and indirect shifts to help themselves.

Their fear may be understood two ways;

1. Subjectively.
2. Effectively.

1. *Subjectively*, for the self-same fear wherewith the carnal, and unbelieving Jews feared; a fear that enslaved them in bondage of spirit, a fear that is the fruit of sin, a sin in its own nature, the cause of much sin to them, and a just punishment of God upon them for their other sins.

2. *Effectively*, Let not your fear produce in you such mischievous effects, as their fear doth; to make you forget God, magnify the creature, prefer your own wits, and policies, to the Almighty Power, and never failing faithfulness of God: if you say, but how shall we help it?

2. Why, in the next place, you have an *effectual remedy prescribed; but sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, and let him be your fear, and your dread* The fear of God will swallow up the fear of man, a reverential awe, and dread of God will extinguish the slavish fear of the creature, as the sun-shine puts out fire, or as one fire fetches out another; so will this fear fetch out that.

By sanctifying the Lord of hosts himself, is meant a due ascription of the glory of his sovereign power, wisdom, and faithfulness, not only in verbal, and professed acknowledgments thereof, but especially in those internal acts of affiance, resignation, and entire dependance on him, which as they are the choicest respects of the creature towards its God, and give him the greatest glory, so they are certainly the most beneficial, and comfortable acts we can perform, for our own peace, and safety, in times of danger.

If a man do really look to God in a day of trouble, and fear, as to the *Lord of hosts*, (*i. e.*) one that governs all the creatures, and all their actions; at whose beck, and command, all the armies of heaven, and earth are, and then can rely upon the care, and love of this God, as a child in danger of trouble reposes on, and commits himself, with greater confidence, to the care, and protection of his father: O what peace, what rest, must necessarily follow, upon this! Who would be afraid to pass through the

midst of armed troops, and regiments, whilst he knows that the general of that army is his own father? The more power this filial fear of God obtains in our hearts, the less will you dread the power of the creature. When the Dictator ruled at Rome, then all other officers ceased; and so, in a great measure, will all other fears, where the fear of God is dictator in the heart. This is the remedy.

3. And to enable us to apply this remedy in the worst, and most difficult times, we have a singular encouragement proposed: if we will thus sanctify the Lord of hosts himself, by such an acknowledgment of, and child-like dependance on him in times of danger, then he will be to us for a *sanctuary*, *Asyli loco*, *(i. e.)* he will surely protect, defend, and provide for us in the worst times, and cases *; then will the Lord "create upon every dwelling-place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud, "and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: "for upon all the glory shall be a defence, and there shall be "a tabernacle for a shadow in the day-time, from the heat, "and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from the storm and "from rain." Let the winds roar, the rain beat, the lightnings flash, you are in safety, and have a good roof over your heads. Hence these two points of doctrine offer themselves:

Doct. 1. *That the best men are too apt to be overcome with slavish fears, in times of imminent distress, and danger.*

Doct. 2. *That the fear of God is the most effectual means to extinguish the sinful fear of men, and to secure us from danger.*

These two points take in the substance, and scope of the text; but because I design to treat, in the following chapters, of the *kinds*, *nature*, *uses*, *causes*, *effects*, and *remedies* of fear, I shall not distinctly prosecute them, but proceed in this order, in the following chapters.

CHAP. II.

Wherein the kinds, and nature of fear, are opened, and particularly the distracting, slavish fear of creatures.

Sect. I. THERE is a threefold fear found in man, *viz.* 1. Natural. 2. Sinful. 3. Religious fear.

* *Praestabit vos inaccessos, et inviolabiles ab his regibus.* He will render you inaccessible, and preserve you from being violated by these kings.

1. Natural fear, of which all are partakers that partake of the common nature, not one excepted.

Natural fear is the trouble, or perturbation of mind, from the apprehension of approaching evil, or impending danger.

The word φόβος, comes from a † verb that signifies flight; this is not always sinful, but it is always the fruit, and consequent of sin. Since sin entered into our nature, there is no shaking off fear. No sooner had Adam transgressed, but he feared and fled, hiding himself among the trees of the garden, Gen. iii. 8. When he had transgressed the covenant, he presently feared the execution of the curse: first he *eats*, then he *hides*; and his afflictive passion is from him transmitted, and derived to all his children.

To this natural fear, it pleased our Lord Jesus Christ to subject himself, in the days of his flesh; he was afraid, yea, he was sore amazed, Mark xiv. 33. for though his human nature was absolutely free from sin, yet he came in the "likeness of sinful "flesh," Rom viii. 3.

This fear creates great trouble, and perturbation in the mind; 1 John iv. 18. *Fear hath torment*; in proportion to the danger is the fear, and in proportion to the fear, the trouble, and distraction of the mind: if the fear be exceeding great, reason is displaced, and can conduct us no farther, as the psalmist speaks of mariners in a storm, "they are at their wits end," Psal. cvii. 27. or, as it is varied in the ‡ Margin, all wisdom is swallowed up. And this is the meaning of Deut. xxviii. 25. that they should go out against their enemies one way, and "flee before "them seven ways," *(i. e.)* so great shall be the fright, and distraction, that they shall attempt now one way, then another, striving every way, but liking none; for fear so far betrays the succours of reason, that their ‖ counsels are always in uncertainty, and at a loss, and the usual voice of a man in this condition is, *I know not what to do, I know not which way to turn.*

Evil is the object of fear, and the greater the evil is, the stronger the fear must needs be, and therefore the terrors of an awakened and terified conscience must be allowed to be the greatest of terrors, because in that case a man hath to do with a great and terrible God, and is scarred with apprehensions of his infinite and eternal wrath, than which, no evil is, or can be

† φεύγομαι *fugio, perfect. med.* πέφυγα, *inde* φόβος *timor, fuga.*

‡ *Rector in incerto est, nec quid fugiatve petatve, invenit;* —— Ovid.

‖ *Pavidi semper consilia in incerto.*

greater. You see at what height Christ's conflict wrought with it when it made him sweat as it were great clots of blood. Of all temporal evils, death is the greatest, and therefore Job calls it *the King of terrors*, Job xviii. 14. or the most terrible of terribles. Thuanus * relates two strange instances of the fear of death: "One of a certain captain, who was so terrified with "the fear of death, that he poured out a kind of bloody sweat, "from all parts of his body. Another is of a young man con- "demned for a small matter by † Sixtus Quintus, who was "so vehemently terrified with the fears of death, that he shed a "kind of bloody tears." These are strange and terrible effects of fear, but vastly short of what Christ felt and suffered, who grappled with a far greater evil than the terrors of death, even the wrath of an incensed God poured out to the full, and that immediately upon him.

But yet evil, as evil, is rather the object of hatred than of fear, it must be an imminent or near approaching evil, which we see not how to escape or put by, that provokes fear, and rouzes this lion. And therefore the saints in glory are perfectly freed from fear, because they are out of the reach of all danger: nor do we, that are here in the midst of evils, fear them till we see them approaching us, and we see not how to avoid them. To hear of fire, plague or the sword in the Indies, doth not affright us, because the evil is so remote from us; it is far enough off, we are in no danger of it; but when it is in the town, much more when within our own dwellings, we tremble. Evil hurts us not by a simple apprehension of its nature, but of its union; and all propinquity is a degree of union, as a ‡ learned divine speaks. And it is worth observation, that all carnal security is maintained by putting evils at a great distance from us; as it is noted of those secure sensualists, Amos vi. 3. "They put far from them the evil day." The meaning is not that they did, or could put the evil one minute farther from them in reality, but only by imagination and fancy; they shut their own eyes, and would not see it, lest it should give an unpleasing interruption to their mirth; and this is the reason why death puts the living into no more fear, because it is appre-

* *Dux quidam indigno mortis metu, adeo concussus fuit, ut sanguineum sudorem toto corpore fudit.* Hist. lib. 11.

† *Juvenis ob levem causam a Sixto V. damnatus, prae doloris vehementia fertur lacrymas cruentas fudisse.* Lib. 80.

‡ Dr. Reynolds.

hended as remote, and at an undetermined distance, whereas if the precise time of death were known, especially if that time were near, it would greatly scare and terrify.

This is the nature of natural fear, the infelicity of nature, which we all groan under the effects of: it is in all the creatures in some degree, but among them all none suffer more by it than man, for hereby he becomes his own tormentor; nor is any torment greater than this when it prevails in a high degree upon us. Indeed all constitutions and tempers admit not the same degrees of fear; some are naturally couragious and stout, like the lion for magnanimity and fortitude; others exceeding timorous and faint-hearted, like the hare or hart, one little dog will make a hundred of them flee before him. Luther was a man of great courage and presence of mind in dangers, * Melancthon very timorous and subject to despondency. Thus the difference betwixt them is expressed in one of Luther's letters to him: "I am well-nigh a secure spectator "of things, and esteem not any thing these fierce and threatening Papists say. I much dislike those anxious cares, which, "as thou writest, do almost consume thee." There might be as great a stock of grace in one as in the other, but Melancthon's grace had not the advantage of so stout and courageous a temper of body and mind as Luther's had. Thus briefly of natural fear.

Sect. II. There is a fear which is formally and intrinsically sinful, not only our felicity, but our fault, not our simple affliction and burden, but our great evil and provocation; and such is the fear here dissuaded, called *their fear (i. e.)* the fear wherewith carnal and unbelieving men do fear, when dangers threaten them; and the sinfulness of it lies in five things.

1. In the spring and cause of it which is unbelief, and an unworthy distrust of God, when we dare not rely upon the security of a divine promise, nor trust to God's protection in the way of our duty. This was the very case of that people, Isa. xxx. 15. "Thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in return"ing and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence "shall be your strength; and ye would not. But ye said, no, "for we will flee upon horses; therefore ye shall flee: and we "will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you "be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one," *&c.*

Thus stood the case: Sennacherib with a mighty host was ready to invade them; this puts them into a fright; in this

* *Epist. ad Melanct. Ann.* 1549.

diſtreſs God aſſures them, by the mouth of his prophet, that in "returning and reſt they ſhall be ſaved, in quietneſs and "confidence ſhould be their ſtrength." The meaning is, never perplex yourſelves with various counſels and projects to ſecure yourſelves under the wings of Egypt or any other Protector, but with a compoſed, quiet, and calm temper of mind, reſt upon my power by faith, take my promiſes for your ſecurity, this ſhall be your ſalvation and your ſtrength, more effectual to your preſervation than armies, garriſons, or any creature-defence in the world; one act of faith ſhall do you better ſervice than Pharaoh and all his forces can do.

But ye ſaid no, *q. d.* we dare not truſt to that, a good horſe will do us more ſervice at ſuch a time than a good promiſe; Egypt is a better ſecurity in their eye than Heaven. This is the fruit of groſs infidelity. And as wicked men do thus forſake God, and cleave to the creature in the time of trouble, ſo there is found a ſpice of this diſtruſtfulneſs of God, producing fear and trouble, in the beſt of men. It was in the diſciples themſelves, Mat. viii. 26. "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little "faith?" A ſtorm had befallen them at ſea, and danger began to threaten them, and preſently you find a ſtorm within, their fears were more boiſterous than the winds, and had more need of calming than the ſea; and it was all from their unbelief, as Chriſt tells them; the leſs their faith, the greater their fear. If a man can but rely upon God in a promiſe, ſo far as he is enabled to believe, ſo far he will reckon himſelf well ſecured. * Illyricus, in his catalogue of the Witneſſes, relates this remarkable paſſage of one Andreas Proles, a godly aged divine, who lived ſomewhat before Luther, and taught many points ſoundly, according to his light then; he was called to a Synod at Milan, and afterwards in the Lateran, where oppoſing a propoſition of the Pope about burdening the church with a new holiday, he was brought into much danger, and eſcaping very narrowly from Rome, he bought him a bow and weapons; but as he was riding, he began to bethink himſelf, that the cauſe was not his but God's, and not to be maintained with ſword and bow: and if it were, yet what could ſuch a decripit old man do with weapons? upon which he threw away his weapons, committed himſelf, his cauſe, and his journey to God, relied upon his promiſes more than ſword or bow, and came home ſafe, and afterwards died quietly in his bed.

* Illyrici Cat. Teſt. Lib. 19.

2. The sinfulness of fear lies in the excess and immoderacy of it, when we fear more than we ought; for it may be truly said of our fears, as the Philosopher speaks of waters, *difficile sunt terminis continentur*, it is hard to keep them within bounds; every bush is a bear, every petty trouble puts us into a fright; our fear exceeds the value and merit of the cause. It is a great sin to love or fear any creature above the rate of a creature, as if they were masters of all our temporal and eternal comforts. Thus when the men of Israel heard of the confederacy and conjunction of their enemies against them, the text saith, "their "hearts were moved, as the trees of the wood are moved with "the wind," Isa. vii. 1. or as we use to say proverbially, like an *aspine leaf*: It is a sad sight to behold men shaking and quivering as the trees do on a windy day; yet thus did the house of David, partly through the remembrance of past calamities, but especially through incredulity in God's protecting care in their present and future dangers; yea, this is too often the fault of good men in creature-fear as well as in creature-love, to transgress the due bounds of moderation. It is noted of Jacob, tho' a man of much faith, and one that had the sweetest encouragement to strengthen it, both from former experiences, and God's gracious promises to be with him, yet when Esau was come nigh, he was "greatly afraid and distressed," Gen. xxxii. 7. It was but a little before, that God had graciously appeared to him, and sent a royal guard of angels to attend him, even two hosts or armies of angels, ver. 1, 2. and yet as soon as Esau approached him, he was afraid, yea greatly afraid, afraid and distressed, notwithstanding such an encouraging vision as this was.

3. The sinfulness of our fears lies in the inordinacy of them; to fear it more than we ought is bad enough, but to magnify its power above the power of a creature; to exalt the power of any creature by our fears, and give it such an ascendant over us, as if it had an arbitrary and absolute dominion over us, or over our comforts, to do with them what it pleased; this is to put the creature out of its own class and rank, into the place of God, and is therefore a very sinful and evil fear.

To trust in any creature, as if it had the power of a God to help us, or to fear any creature, as if it had the power of a God to hurt us, is exceeding sinful, and highly provoking to God: This inordinate trust is taxed and condemned, in Isaiah xxxi. 3. They would needs go down to Egypt for help, and trust in their horses and horsemen, because they were strong; *i. e.* in their opinion, they were able to secure them against all

those dangers the prophet from the Lord's own mouth had threatened them with: but, to take them off from this sinful and inordinate dependence on the creature, he tells them, ver. 3. "Now the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses "flesh, and not spirit: when the Lord shall stretch forth his "hand, both he that helpeth shall fall, and he that is holpen "shall fall down, and they shall fall together." *q. d.* It is a sinful and dangerous mistake for one creature, to give that trust and dependence to another creature, which is due only to God, to look upon men as if they were gods, and horses as if they were spirits: all creatures, even the strongest, are but as the hop, the vine, or the ivy; if they clasp about the pole, the wall or the oak, they may be supported, as you may also by leaning upon God; but if they depend and entangle themselves one upon another, as you and the Egyptians do, you shall fail, and fall all together.

And, as one creature is apt inordinately and sinfully thus to trust and lean upon another, so there is as great a profaneness in the creatures inordinately to fear and dread each other, as if the creature feared were rather a god than a man, rather a spirit than flesh; and thus our fear magnifies and exalts the creature, and puts it, as it were, into the room and place of God. This was the sin which God rebuked in his own people, Isa. li. 12, 13. "I, even I, am he that comforteth thee: Who art thou, "that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die, and of "the son of man who shall be made as grass? and forgettest "the Lord thy maker," *&c.* See how fear exalts man, and depresseth God; it thinks upon the noxious power of men so much, that it forgets the saving power of God, as if that stood for nothing: thus a mortal worm, that shall perish as the grass, eclipses the glory of the great God, that stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth.

And this was the evil against which Christ cautioned his own disciples, in Matth. x. 28. "Fear not them which kill the body, "but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him, which is "able to destroy both soul and body in hell;" *q. d.* Have a care you never fear any man, be he armed with never so much power and rage; as if the power of making or marring you for ever were in his hands, as if you lay at the feet of his will and pleasure to be saved or ruined for ever: fear not him that can only touch your bodies, as if he could damn your souls; invest not any creature with the sovereign and incommunicable power of God.

4. The sinfulness of fear consists in the distracting influence

it hath upon the hearts of men, whereby it discomposeth and unfits them for the discharge of their duties.

Fear sometimes puts men into such an hurry, and their thoughts into such disorder, that for the present they have scarce any succour or relief from their graces, or from their reason; for under an extraordinary fear both grace and reason, like the wheels of a watch, wound above its due height, stand still, and have no motion at all. It is rare to find a man of that largeness and constancy of heart and mind, in a day of fear, that was found in Jehoshaphat, 2 Chron. xx. 2, 3. "Then there came some "that told Jehoshaphat, saying, There cometh a great multi-"tude against thee from beyond the sea, on this side Syria, and "behold they be in Hazazon-Tamar, which is Engedi; and Je-"hoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the Lord." He set himself, *i. e.* he composed and fixed his heart for prayer in the time of so great a fright, and terrible alarm: but it is rare to find such constancy and evenness of mind as this; in like cases it is with most in great frights, as the prophet describes the condition of the Jews, Isa. xxii. 2, 3. when the city of Jerusalem was besieged, and the enemy came under the walls of it; that which a little before was the joyous city, or as some read, the revelling city, is now in such a panic fear, that it is full of stirs and tumults, some run up to the tops of the houses, either to hide or bewail themselves, or take a view of the dreadful enemy without; others prevent the sword of the enemy, and die by fear before-hand, their own apprehensions of misery killed them before the sword of any other enemy once touched them; but you read of none that ran into their closets to seek the Lord; the city was full of stirs, but none of prayers, alas, fear made them cry to the mountains, rather than to God, ver. 5. The best men find it hard to keep their thoughts from wandering, and their minds from distraction, in the greatest calm of peace, but a thousand times harder in the hurries and tumults of fear.

5. The sinfulness of fear consists in the power it hath to dispose and incline men to the use of sinful means to put by their danger, and to cast them into the hands and power of temptation. "The fear of man bringeth a snare," Prov. xxix. 25. or puts and lays a snare before him: Satan spreads the net, and fear, like the stalking-horse, drives men right into it. It was fear which drew Abraham, that great believer, into the snare of dissimulation, to the great disparagement of religion; for it was somewhat an odd sight to see Abimelech, an Heathen, so schooling an Abraham for it, as he did, Gen. xx. 9. And for

the same evil you find God chiding his people, in Isa. l
" And of whom hast thou been afraid, or feared, tha
" hast lied, and hast not remembered me?" There is a
lie occasioned by fear, one in words, and another in deed
pocrify is a lie done, a practical lie, and our church-
abounds with sad examples of dissimulation through fear
Satan's great engine to make his temptations victorious an
cessful with men.

Sect. III. There is an holy and laudable fear, a fear wh
our treasure, not our torment; the chief ornament of th
its beauty and perfection, not its infelicity or sin, *viz.* th
ful filial fear of God; natural fear is a pure and simple
of the soul; sinful fear is the disordered and corrupt pas
the soul; but this is the natural passion sanctified, and th
changed and baptized into the name and nature of a spi
grace. This fear is also mentioned in my text, and prescr
as an antidote against sinful fears; it devours carnal fea
Moses's serpent did those of the enchanters. It is one o
sorest judgments to be in the fear of man day and night, I
xxviii. 65, 66, 67. and one of the sweetest mercies to be in
fear of God all the day long, Prov. xxiii. 17. The fear of
shortens our days, Isa. xxii. 34. but the fear of the
prolongeth our days, Prov. x. 27. The fear of the Lo
a fountain of life, Prov. xiv. 27. But the fear of man a f
tain of mischiefs and miseries: By the fear of the Lord
depart from evil, Prov. xvi. 6. but, by the *fear of man*,
run themselves into evil, Prov. xxix. 25.

This fear is a *gracious habit or principle planted by G*
the soul, whereby the soul is kept under an holy awe of th
of God, and from thence is inclined to perform and do
pleaseth him, and to shun and avoid whatsoever he forbids
bates.

1. It is planted in the soul as a permanent and fixed habit;
not of the natural growth and production of man's heart, b
supernatural infusion and implantation, Jer. xxxii. 40. " I
" put my fear into their inward parts." To fear man is
ral, but to fear God is wholly supernatural.

2. This gracious fear puts the soul under the awe of
eye, Psal. cxix. 161. " My heart standeth in awe of
" word." 'Tis the reproach of the servants of men to be
servants, but it is the praise and honour of God's servants
so.

3. This respect to the eye of God, inclines them to pe
and do whatsoever pleaseth him, and is commanded by

Hence, fearing God, and working righteousness, are connected and linked together, Acts x. 35. If we truly fear God, we dare not but do the things he commands; and if his fear be exalted in our hearts to an high degree, it will enable us to obey him in duties accompanied with deepest self-denial, Gen. xxii. 12. "Now I know thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld "thy son, thine only son from me."

4. This fear engageth, and in some degree enableth the soul, in which it is, to shun and avoid whatsoever is displeasing to God, and forbidden by him; in this Job discovered himself a true fearer of God, he would not touch what God had forbidden, and therefore was honoured with this excellent character, "He was one that feared God, and eschewed evil," Job i. 3.

And thus of the several kinds of fear.

CHAP. III.

Shewing the various uses of Fear, *both* natural, sinful, *and* religious, *in the government of the world by Providence.*

HAVING taken a brief view of the several kinds and sorts of fear that are found among men, our next work will be to open the uses of them in the government of this world; for one way or other they all subserve the most wise and holy purposes of God therein. And we will first enquire into

1. *The use of natural fear.*

Which if we well consider, it will be found exceeding necessary and useful to make man a governable creature by law, and consequently the order, comfort and tranquillity of the world necessarily depend upon it. How immorigerous and intractable would the corruptions of man's nature make him, uncapable of any moral restraint from the most flagitious and barbarous crimes, had not God planted such a passion as this in his nature, which, like a * bridle, curbs in the corrupt propensions thereof. If fear did not clap its manacles and fetters upon the wild and boisterous lusts of men, they would certainly bear down all milder motives, and break loose from all ingenuous bands of restraint; the world would inevitably be filled with disorders, tumults, rapines, thefts, murders, and all manner

* Fear is like a bridle, by which the horse is governed: if this passion of fear is removed, all other restraints will be broken down. *Lavat. on Prov.* xxix. 25.

of uncleanneſs and unrighteouſneſs, *nec hoſpes ab hoſpite tutus*, *i. e.* the lodger is not ſafe from the perſon entertaining him; † men would become like the fiſhes of the ſea, as the prophet complains, Habbak. i. 14. where the greater ſwallow up a multitude of the ſmaller fry alive at one gulp; propriety could not be maintained in the world, no man's perſon could be ſafe or inviolate; power and opportunity to do miſchief would meaſure out to men their lot and inheritance, and conſequently all ſocieties muſt diſband and break up. We ſay, and the obſervation is ſure, *He that fears not his own, may eaſily be maſter of another man's life.* It is the law, and fear of puniſhment, that keeps the world in order: men are afraid to do evil, becauſe they are afraid to ſuffer it; they ſee the law hath inſeparably linked penal and moral evils together; if they will preſume upon the one, they muſt neceſſarily pull the other upon them too; and this keeps them in ſome order and decorum: there would be no order or ſecurity without law; but if laws had not annexed penalties to enforce them, and give them their ſanction, as good there were no laws; they would have no more power to reſtrain the corruptions of mens hearts, than the new cords or green withs had to bind Sampſon. And yet, if the ſevereſt penalties in the world were annexed to, or appointed by the law, they could ſignify nothing to the ends of the government without fear. This is that tender ſenſible power, or paſſion, on which threatenings work, and ſo brings men under moral government and reſtraint, Rom. xiii. 3, 4. "Magiſtrates are a "terror to evil works; wilt thou not then be afraid of the "power? But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid, for he "beareth not the ſword in vain." And by this means a world of evils is reſtrained and prevented in the world.

It was the cuſtom and policy of the Perſians, (I cannot ſay laudable) at the death of their kings, to give every man liberty for the ſpace of five days, to do what he would; and ſuch miſchiefs were done every-where by the unbridled luſts of men in thoſe days, that it made the people long and pray for the inſtalment of their next king: it exceedingly endeared government to them. Bleſſed be God for law and government, for curbing by

† An intelligent creature, as a *creature*, has a Superior, to whoſe providence and diſpoſal it is ſubjected; and as it is *intelligent*, it is capable of moral government, by which it may be directed to good, and reſtrained from evil; and ſuch a law is abſolutely neceſſary to it, that it may live ſuitably to its nature. *Suarez of laws, book* 1. *c.* 3.

this means the raging lusts of the hearts of men, and procuring rest and comfort for us in the world this way.

2. *The use of sinful fear.*

This is formally evil and sinful in its own nature, as well as the fruit of sin, and offspring of sinful nature; yet the Lord knows how to over-rule it in his providential government of the world to his own wise and holy purposes. And he doth so,

1. By making it his scourge to punish his enemies. If men will not fear God, they shall fear men; yea, they shall be made a terror to themselves. And indeed it is a dreadful punishment for God to deliver a man up into the hands of his own fears. I think there is scarce a greater torment to be found in the world, than for a man to be his own tormentor, and his mind made a rack and engine of torture to his body. We read in 2 Kings xvii. 25. that God sent lions among the people; but certainly that is not so bad as for God to let loose our own fears upon us. No lion is so cruel as this passion, and therefore David esteemed it so great a deliverance to be delivered from all his fears, Psal. xxxiv. 4. It is a dreadful threatening which is recorded in Deut. xxviii. 65, 66, 67. against the disobedient and rebellious, "Thou shalt find no ease, neither shall the sole "of thy foot have rest, but the Lord shall give thee there a trem-"bling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind, and thy "life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day "and night, and shalt have no assurance of thy life. In the "morning thou shalt say, Would God it were even; and at "even thou shalt say, Would God it were morning, for the fear "of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of "thine eyes which thou shalt see." When fear hath once seized the heart, you may see death's colours displayed in the face. What a dismal life do they live, who have neither any peace by day, nor rest by night, but wearisome days and nights are appointed them! The days of such men are tiresome days; they wish for the night, hoping it may give them a little rest; but their fears go to bed with them, their hearts pant and meditate terror; and then, Oh that it were day again!

2. By fear God punisheth his enemies in hell: it is that *flagellum Dei*, terrible scourge of God, by which a great part of the torment of the damned is inflicted on them. Divines use to make this tripartite distinction of hell-torments, and tell us, God punishes the wicked there partly by remembrance of what is past, *viz.* the mercies and means they once had, but are there irrecoverably lost; partly by the sense of things present, even the

wrath of God overlaying soul and body; and partly by the fear of what is to come; and sure this is not the least part of the misery of these wretched cast-aways. Oh that fearful ‡ expectation of fiery indignation! more and more of God's wrath still coming on, as the waves of the sea, thrusting forward one on another; yea, this is that which makes the devils tremble, James ii. 19. φρίσσουσι, the word signifies such a noise as the roar of the sea, or the roaring of the waves when they break themselves against the rocks, and this is occasioned by the fears which are continually held as a whip over them.

3. Providence makes use of the slavish fears and terrors of wicked men, to dissipate and scatter them, when they are combined, and confederated against the people of God; by these have they been routed, and put to flight, when there hath been no other visible power to do it: it is said Psalm lxxviii. 55. God cast out the heathen before his people Israel; and by what means were those mighty nations subdued? Not by the strength of multitudes of the Israelites, but by their own fears; for it is said, Josh. xxiv. 11, 12. "The Lord sent the hornet before "them, which drave them out *." These hornets were the fears and terrors of their own guilty and presaging mind, which buzzed and swarmed in their own breasts, and stung them to the heart, worse than the swords of the Israelites could do. "† Theodoret relates a memorable story of Sapores king of Persia, "who had besieged many Christians in the city Nisibis, and put "them to great straits, so that little hopes of safety were left "them; but in the depth of their distress, God sent an army of "hornets, and gnats, among their enemies, which got into the "trunks of their elephants, and ears, and nostrils of their horses; which so enraged them, that they brake their harness, "cast their riders, and put them all to the rout, by which providence the Christians escaped." These hornets were terrible to them, but fears, which are hornets in a figure, are ten thou-

‡ The mind, anxious about futurity, is in a calamitous state, and miserable before miseries come. *Sen.*

* Hornets, by a metaphor, signify sudden fear which was raised in their guilty minds by God. *Lavat. on the place.*

† *Sapores rex Percarum cum urbem Nisibin in qua erant Christiani, obsedisset; eamque affligeret, magna vis crabonum et culicum repente venit, et in promuscides cavas Elephantorum consedit, complevitque aures equorum, ita ut sessores excusserint, et turbatores ordines in fugam converterint.* Hist. lib. 2. cap. 30.

sand times more terrible; they will quell, and sink the very hearts of the stoutest men; yea, they will quickly make those that in their pride, and haughtiness, took themselves rather to be gods, and almighty powers, to know themselves to be but men, as it is, Psal ix. 20. "Put them in fear, O Lord, that they may "know themselves to be but men." One fright will scare them out of a thousand fond conceits and idle dreams.

3. *The use of religious fear.*

If God can make such fruit to grow upon such a bramble as the sinful, slavish fear of man is, what may we expect from religious fear, a choice root of his own Spirit's planting? The uses, and benefits hereof, are innumerable, and inestimable; but I must contract, and will only instance in three special uses of it.

1. By this fear the people of God are excited to, and confirmed in the way of their duty. Eccles. xii. 13. "Fear God, "and keep his commandments." It is, *custos utriusque tabulae*, the keeper of both tables, because the duties of both tables are influenced by it. It is this fear of God that makes us have a due respect to all his commands, and it is as powerful to confirm us in, as it is to excite us to our duties. Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will put my fear into their inwards, and they shall not "depart from me." Look, as he that soweth doth not regard the winds, but goes on in his labour, whatever weather the face of heaven threatens; so he that fears God, will be found in the way of his duty, let the aspect of the times be never so lowring, and discouraging: and, truly, this is no small advantage, in times of frights, and distractions. Slavish fear sets a man upon the devil's ground, religious fear upon God's ground: And, how vast an odds is there in the choice of our ground, when we are to *endure a great fight of affliction!*

2. Another excellent use of this fear is, to preserve the purity and peace of our consciences, by preventing grief and guilt therein, Prov. xvi. 6. "The fear of the Lord is to depart from "evil." See how it kept Joseph, Gen. xxxix. 9. and Nehemiah, chap. v. 15. And this benefit is invaluable, especially in a day of outward calamity and distress. Look, in what degree the fear of God prevails in our hearts, answerable thereunto will the serenity, peace, and quietness of our consciences be; and proportionable unto that will our strength and comfort be in the evil day, and our courage and confidence to look dangers in the face.

3. To conclude, a principal use of this fear of God is, to awaken us to make timely provisions for future distresses, that

whensoever they come, they may not come by way of surprize upon us. Thus "Noah, being moved with fear, prepared an "ark," Heb. xi. 7. It was the instrument of his and his families salvation. Some men owe their death to their fears, but good men, in a sense, owe their lives to their fears; sinful fears have slain some, and godly fears have saved others. "A wise "man feareth and departeth from evil, (saith Solomon) but a "fool rageth and is confident." His fears give him a timely alarm before the enemy falls into his quarters, and beat them up; by this means he hath time to get into his chambers of security and rest, before the storm fall: "But the fool rageth, and is confi-"dent;" he never fears till he begins to feel; yea, most times he is past all hope before he begin to have any fear.

These are some of the uses God makes of the several kinds of fear.

CHAP. IV.

Wherein the springs and causes of sinful fear are searched out, and the evils of such fears thence discovered.

Sect. 1. HAVING shewn before, the kinds, and uses of fear; it remains, that next we search out the springs from which these waters of Marah are derived, and fed. And,

Cause 1. *First*, We shall find the sinful fears of most good men to spring out of their ignorance, and the darkness of their own minds; all darkness disposes to fear, but none like intellectual darkness. You read, Cant. iii. 8. how Solomon's life-guard had every man his sword upon his thigh, *because of fear in the night*. The night is the frightful season, in the dark every bush is a bear; we sometimes smile by day, to see what silly things those were that scared us in the night. So it is here; were our judgments but duely informed, how soon would our hearts be quieted?

Now there is a five-fold ignorance, out of which our fears are generated:

1. Ignorance of God: Either we know not, or at least do not duely consider his Almighty Power, vigilant care, unspotted faithfulness, and how they are all engaged, by covenant, for his people. This ignorance, and inconsiderateness, lay at the root of their fears, Isa. xl. 27, 28. "My way (saith Zion) is "hid from the Lord, and my judgment passed over from my "God:" Words importing a suspicion that God hath left her

out of the account of his providence, and the catalogue of those whom he would look after, and take care for.

But were it once thoroughly understood, and believed, what power there is in God's hand to defend us, what tenderness in his bowels to commiserate us, what faithfulness in all the promises, in which they are made over to us, O how quiet and calm would our hearts be! Our courage would quickly be up, and our fears down.

2. Our ignorance of men generates our fears of men; we fear them, because we do not know them; if we understood them better, we would fear them less; we over-value them, and then fright at them. They say the lion is painted more fierce than he is; I am sure our fancy paints out man more dreadful than indeed he is; if wicked men, especially if multitudes of wicked men be confederated against us, our hearts fail, and presently apprehend inevitable ruin. "The floods of "the ungodly made me afraid," saith David, (*i. e.*) the multudes of them which he thought, like a flood or mighty torrent of water, must needs sweep away such a straw, such a feather, as he was, before them; but, in the mean time, we know, or consider not that they have no power against us, but what is given them from above, and that it is usual with God to cramp their hands, and clap on the bands of restraint upon them, when their hearts are fully set in them to do mischief: did we see, and consider them as they are in the hand of our God, we should not tremble at them as we do.

3. Ignorance of ourselves, and the relation we have to God, creates slavish fears in our hearts, Isa. li. 12. for did believers but thoroughly understand how dear they are to God, what relations they sustain to him, of what account, and value, they are in his eyes, and how well they are secured by his faithful promises, and gracious presence, they would not start and tremble at every noise, and appearance of danger, as they do. God reckoned it enough to cure all Abraham's sinful fears, when he told him how his God stood engaged for his defence. Gen. xv. 1. "Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield."

And noble Nehemiah valued himself in times of danger and fear, by his interest in God, as his words import, Neh. vi. 11. The conspiracy against him was strong, the danger he and the faithful with him at that time were in, was extraordinary; some, therefore, advised to flee to the temple, and barracado themselves there, against the enemy: But Nehemiah understood himself better; *Should such a man as I flee? And who, being as I am, should flee?* saith he, *q. d.* A man so called of God to this service,

a man under such promises, a man of such manifold and manifest experiences, should such a man flee? Let others, who have no such encouragements, flee if they will; for my part, I will not flee. I remember it was an argument used by ‡ Tertullian, to quiet the fears, and stay the flight of Christians in those bloody times; Art thou afraid of a man, O Christian! when devils are afraid of thee, as a prisoner of his judge, and whom the world ought to fear, as being one that shall judge the world. O that we could, without pride and vanity, but value ourselves duely, according to our Christian dignities and privileges, which, if ever it be necessary to count over, and value, it is in such times of danger and fear, when the heart is so prone to dejection, and sinking fears.

4. Ignorance of our dangers and troubles, causes our frights and terrors; we mistake them, and therefore are frighted at them, we are ignorant of two things in our troubles among others, *viz.*

1. The comforts that are in them.

2. The outlets and escapes from them.

There is a vast odds betwixt the outward appearance, and face of trouble, and the inside of it; it is a lion to the eye at a distance, but open it, and there is honey in its belly. Paul and Silas met that in a prison which made them sing at midnight, and so have many more since their day.

And as we are not ignorant of the comforts that are sometimes found in our troubles, so of the outlets, and doors of escape, God can, and often doth, open out of trouble; "To God the "Lord, belong the issues from death," Psal. lxviii. 20. "He "knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation," 2 Pet. ii. 9. He can, with every temptation, make a way to escape, 1 Cor. x. 13. the poor captive exile reckoned upon nothing, but dying in the pit, making their graves in the land of their captivity, Isa. li. 14. for they could think upon none, but the usual methods of deliverance, power, or price, and they had neither; little did they dream of such immediate influences of God upon the king's heart, to make him dismiss them, freely, contrary to all rules of state policy, Isa. xlv. 12.

5. But especially the fears of good men arise out of their ig-

‡ Art thou afraid of a man, O Christian! who shouldst be feared by angels, since thou art to judge angels; who shouldst be feared by devils, since thou hast got power over devils; who shouldst be feared by all the world, since all the world is to be judged by thee. *Tertul. on Fear.*

norance and inconsiderateness of the *covenant of grace.* If we were better acquainted with the nautre, extent, and stability of the *covenant*, our hearts would be much freed thereby, from these tormenting passions; this covenant would be a *panacea*, an universal remedy against all our fears, upon spiritual, or temporal accounts, as will be made evident hereafter in this discourse.

Cause 2. Another cause, and fountain of sinful fear, is guilt upon the conscience. A servant of sin cannot but, first, or last, be a slave of fear; and they that have done evil, cannot chuse but expect evil. No sooner had Adam defiled, and wounded his conscience with guilt, but he presently trembles, and hides himself: So it is with his children; God calls to Adam, not in a threatening, but gentle dialect; not in a tempest, but in the cool of the day; yet it terrifies him, there being in himself *mens conscia facti*, a guilty, and condemning conscience, Gen. iii. 8. "It is * Seneca's observation, that a guilty conscience is a terrible whip, and torment to the sinner, perpetually lashing him with sollicitous thoughts and fears, that he knows not where to be secure, nor dare he trust to any promises of protection, but distrusts all doubts, and is jealous of all." Of such it is said, Job xv. 21. that *a dreadful sound is in their ears;* noting not only the effects of real, but also of imaginary dangers: His own presaging mind, and troubled fancy, scares him, where no real danger is, suitable to that, Prov. xxviii. 1. *The wicked fleeth when none pursues, but the righteous is bold as a lion.* Just as they say of sheep, that they are affrighted by the clattering of their own feet, when once they are set a running; so is the guilty sinner with the noise of his own conscience, which sounds nothing in his ears but misery, wrath, and hell. We may say of all wicked men in their frights, as † Tacitus doth of *tyrants*, "That if it were possible to open their inside, their mind and conscience; many terrible stripes, and wounds, would be found there:" And it is said, Isa. xxxiii. 14. the sinners in Sion are afraid, trembling taketh hold of the hypocrite. Fear and trembling as naturally arise out of guilt, as the sparks do out of a fiery

* *Male facinorum conscientia flagellari, et plurimum illi tormentorum esse, eo quod perpetuo illam solicitudo urget, ac verberat quod sponsoribus securitatis suae non potest credere.* Senec. Epist. 97.

† *Si recludantur mentes tyrannorum posse aspici laniatus et ictus.* Annal.

charcoal. Histories abundantly furnish us with sad examples of the truth of this observation. Cataline, that monster of wickedness, would start at any sudden noise, being haunted with the furies of his own evil conscience. Charles IX. after his bloody and barbarous massacre of the Protestants, could neither sleep nor wake without music to divert his thoughts. And our Richard III. after the murder of his two innocent nephews, saw divers images or shapes like devils in his sleep, pulling and hauling him. Mr. Ward tells of a Jesuit in Lancashire, who being followed by one that had found his glove, out of no other design but to restore it to him, but being pursued by his own guilty conscience also, he leaped over the next hedge, and was drowned. And remarkable is that which Mr. Fox relates of cardinal Crescentius, who fancied the devil was walking in his chamber, and sometimes couching under his table, as he was writing letters to Rome against the Protestants. *Impius tantum metuit, quantum nocuit:* so much mischief as conscience tells them they have done, so much it bids them expect. Wolfius tells us of one John Hofmeister who fell sick with the very terrors of his own conscience in his inn, as he was travelling towards Auspurge in Germany, and was frighted by his own conscience to that degree, that they were fain to bind him in his bed with chains; and all that they could get from him was, *I am cast away for ever, I have grievously wounded my own conscience.*

To this wounded and trembling conscience is opposed the spirit of a sound mind, mentioned 2 Tim. i. 7. "God hath not "given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a "sound mind:" A sound mind is, in this place, the same thing with a pure and peaceable conscience, a mind or conscience not infirm, or wounded with guilt, as we say a sound or hale body, which hath no disease attending it, such a mind is opposed to the spirit of fear; it will make a man bold as a lion;

——*Nil conscire sibi, nulla pallescere culpa,*
Hic murus aheneus esto.— Ho. l. 1. ep. 1.

By this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preserve thy conscious innocence,
Nor e'er turn pale with guilt.——

An evil and guilty conscience foments fears and terrors three ways.

1. By aggravating small matters, and blowing them up to the height of the most fatal and destructive evils; so it was with Cain, Gen. iv. 14. "Every one that meets me will slay me."

Now every child was a giant in his eye, and any body he met his over-match. A guilty conscience gives a man no sight of his enemy, but through a magnifying or multiplying glass.

2. It begets fears, by interpreting all doubtful cases in the worst sense that can be fastened upon them; *Pessimus in dubiis augur timor.* If the swallows do but chatter in the chimney, Bessus interprets it to be a discovery of his crime, that they are telling tales of him, and saying, Bessus killed a man. Nay,

3. If a guilty conscience hath nothing to aggravate and magnify, nor any doubtful matter to interpret in a frightful sense, it can, and often doth create fears and terrors out of nothing at all: the rules of fear are not like the rules in arithmetic, where many nothings make nothing, but fear can make something out of nothing, yea, many things, and great things out of nothing at all, Psal. liii. 5. *there were they in great fear where no fear was;* here was a great fear raised or created out of nothing at all; had their fear been examined and hunted home to its original*, it would have been found a pure creature of fancy, a *chimera* having no *fundamentum in re*, no other foundation but a troubled fancy, and a guilty conscience; thus it was with Pashur, he was a very wicked man, and a bitter enemy to the prophet Jeremy, and if there be none to fright and terrify from abroad, rather than he shall want it, he shall be a terror to himself, Jer. xx. 3, 4. he was his own bugbear, afraid of his own shadow; and truly this is a great plague and misery; he that is a terror to himself, can no more flee from terrors than he can flee from himself. Oh, the efficacy of conscience! how doth it arrest the stoutest sinners, and make them tremble, when there is no visible external cause of fear! *Nemo se judice, nocens absolvitur; i. e.* No guilty man is absolved, even when himself acts the part of the judge.

Objection 1. But may not a good man, whose sins are pardoned, be affrighted with his own fancies, and scared with his own imaginations?

Solution. No doubt he may, for there is a twofold fountain of fears, one in the body, another in the soul, one in the constitution, another in the conscience; it is the affliction and infelicity of many pardoned and gracious souls, to be united and married to such distempered and ill habited bodies, as shall af-

* In time of fear and danger, objects of terror appear to those who are terrified more numerous and greater than they are in reality; as such things are then more credulously believed, and more easily imagined. *Cicero.*

hit them without any real cause from within, and wound them by their own diseases and distempers; and these wounds can no more be prevented or cured by their reason or religion, than any other bodily disease, suppose an ague or fever, can be so cured. Thus * physicians tell us, when adust choler or melancholy overflows and abounds in the body, as in the hypochondriacal distempers, &c. what sad effects it hath upon the mind as well as upon the body, there is not only a sad and fearful aspect or countenance without, but sorrow, fear, and afflicting thoughts within; there is a sore affliction to many good men, whose consciences are sprinkled with the blood of Christ from guilt, but yet God sees good to clog them with such affliction as this for their humiliation, and for the prevention of worse evils.

Object. 2. But many bold and daring sinners are found, who, notwithstanding all the guilt with which their consciences are loaded, can look dangers in the face without trembling, yea, they can look death itself, the king of terrors, in the face, with less fear than better men.

Sol. True, but the reason of that is from a spiritual judgment of God upon their hearts and consciences, whereby they are hardened, and seared as with a hot iron, 2 Tim. iv. 2. and so conscience is disabled for the present, to do its office, it cannot put forth its efficacy and activity now, when it might be useful to their salvation, but it will do it to purpose hereafter, when their case shall be remediless.

Cause 3. We see what a forge of fears a guilty conscience is, and no less is the sin of unbelief, the real and proper cause of most distracting and afflictive fears; so much as our souls are empty of faith, they are, in times of trouble, filled with fear: We read of some that have died by no other hand but their own fears; but we never read of any that died by fear, who were once brought to live by faith; if men would but dig to the root of their fears, they would certainly find unbelief there, Matth. viii. 26. *Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith!* The less faith, still the more fear: Fear is generated by unbelief, and unbelief strengthened by fear, as in nature there is an ob-

* Fernel. Pathiol. lib. 2. cap. 16. *Corporis habitus siccus et macilentus, aspectus inconstans, horridus ac mœstus, in morbis animi metus et mœstitia, taciturnitas, solicitudo, inanis rerum commentatio somnis turbulentus, horrendis insomnus fluctuans, et agitatus spectris rerum nigrarum, &c.*

ſervable κυκλοφορικῶς, circular generation, vapours beget ſhowers, and ſhowers new vapours; ſo it is in things moral, and therefore all the ſkill in the world can never cure us of the diſeaſe of fear, till God firſt cure us of our unbelief; Chriſt therefore took the right method to rid his diſciples of their fear, by rebuking their unbelief. The remains of this ſin in God's own people is the cauſe and fountain of their fears, and more particularly to ſhew how fear is generated by unbelief, let a few particulars be heedfully adverted to.

1. Unbelief weakens and ſtumbles the aſſenting act of faith, and thereby cuts off from the ſoul, in a great meaſure, its principal relief againſt danger and troubles. It is the uſe and office of faith to realize to the ſoul the inviſible things of the world to come, and thereby encourage it againſt the fears and dangers of the preſent world: Thus *Moſes forſook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured, as ſeeing him that is inviſible*, Heb. xi. 27. If this aſſenting act of faith be weakened or ſtaggered in the ſoul, if once inviſibles ſeem uncertainties, and viſibles the only realities, no wonder we are ſo ſcared and frighted when theſe viſible and ſenſible comforts are expoſed and endangered, as they often are and will be in this mutable world. That man muſt needs be afraid to ſtand his ground that is not thoroughly perſuaded the ground he ſtands on is firm and good; it is not to be wondered that men ſhould tremble, who ſeem to feel the ground ſhake and reel under them.

2. Unbelief ſhuts up the refuges of the ſoul in the divine promiſes, * and by leaving it without thoſe refuges, muſt needs leave it in the hand of fears and terrors. That which fortifies and emboldens a Chriſtian in evil times, is his dependance upon God for a protection, Pſal. cxliii. 9. *I fly unto thee to hide me.* The cutting off this retreat (which nothing but unbelief can do) deprives the ſoul of all thoſe ſuccours and ſupports which the promiſes afford, and conſequently fills the heart with anxiety and fear.

3. Unbelief makes men negligent and careleſs in providing for troubles before they come, and ſo brings them by way of ſurpriſe upon them; and the more ſurpriſing any evil is, the more frightful it is always found to be: we cannot think that Noah was ſo affrighted at the flood, when it began to ſwell above all the hills and mountains, as all the reſt of the world was; nor was there any reaſon that he ſhould, having foreſeen

* *Multa fidem promiſſa levant, i. e.* Many promiſes ſupport faith.

it by faith, and made provision for it, Heb. xi. 7. *By faith Noah, being warned of God, prepared an ark.* * Augustine relates a very pertinent and memorable story of Paulinus, bishop of Nola, who was a very rich man both in goods and grace: he had much of the world in his hands, but little of it in his heart; and it was well there was not, for the Goths, a barbarous people, breaking into that city, like so many devils, fell upon the prey; those that trusted to the treasures which they had, were deceived and ruined by them, for the rich were put to tortures to confess where they had hid their monies: This good bishop fell into their hands, and lost all he had, but was scarce moved at the loss, as appears by his prayer, which my author relates thus: *Lord, let me not be troubled for my gold and silver: thou knowest it is not my treasure; that I have laid up in heaven, according to thy command. I was warned of this judgment before it came, and provided for it; and where all my interest lies, Lord, thou knowest.*

Thus Mr. Bradford, when the keeper's wife came running into his chamber suddenly, with words able to have put the most men in the world into a trembling posture: Oh, Mr. Bradford! I bring you heavy tidings; to-morrow you must be burned, and your chain is now buying: He put off his hat, and said, *Lord, I thank thee; I have looked for this a great while, it is not terrible to me; God make me worthy of such a mercy.* See the benefit of a prospect of, and preparation for sufferings!

4. Unbelief leaves our dearest interests and concerns in our own hands, it commits nothing to God, and consequently must needs fill the heart with distracting fears when imminent dangers threaten us. Reader, if this be thy case, thou wilt be a Magor missabib, surrounded with terrors, whensoever thou shalt be surrounded with dangers and troubles. Believers in this, as well as in many other things, have the advantage of thee, that they have committed all that is precious and valuable to them into the hands of God by faith, to him they have committed the keeping of their souls, 1 Pet iv. 19. and all their eternal concernments, 2 Tim. i. 16. And these being put into safe hands, they are not distracted with fears about other matters of less value, but can trust them where they have entrusted the greater, and enjoy the quietness and peace of a resigned soul to God, Prov. xvi. 3. But as for thee, thy life, thy liberty, yea, which is infinitely more than all these things, thy soul will lye upon thy hands in the day of trouble, and thou wilt not know what to

* *Aug. de Civitat. Dei, lib.* 1. *cap.* 10.

do with them, nor which way to dispose of them. Oh! these be the dreadful straits and frights that unbelief leaves men in; it is a fountain of fears and distractions. And indeed it cannot but distract and confound carnal men, in whom it reigns, and is in its full strength, when sad experience shews us what fears and tremblings the very remains and reliques of this sin begets in the best men, who are not fully freed from it. If the unpurged reliques of unbelief in them can thus darken and cloud their evidences, thus greaten and multiply their dangers; if it can draw such sad and unfrightful conclusions in their hearts, notwithstanding all the contrary experience of their lives, as we see in that sad instance, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. What panic fears, and unrelieved terrors must it put those men under, where it is in its full strength and dominion?

Cause 4. Moreover, we shall find many of our fears raised and provoked in us by the promiscuous administrations of providence in this world, when we read in scripture, that "there is one "event to the righteous and to the wicked, and all things come "alike to all," Eccl. ix. 2, that when the sword is drawn, God suffers it to cut off the righteous and the wicked, Ezek. xxi. 3, The sword makes no difference where God hath made so great a difference by grace; it neither distinguishes faces, nor breasts, but is as soon sheathed in the bowels of the best as the worst of men. When we read how the same fire of God's indignation devours the green tree and the dry tree, Ezek. xx. 47, how the baskets of good figs (the emblem of the best men of those times) were carried into Babylon as well as the bad, Jer. xxiv. 5. how the flesh of God's saints hath been given for meat to the fowls of heaven, and to the beasts of the field, Psal. xcvii. 12. and how the wicked have devoured the man that is more righteous than himself, as it is Hab. i. 13. I say, when we observe such things in scripture, and find our observations confirmed by the accounts and histories of former and later ages; when we reflect upon the unspeakable miseries, and butcheries of those plain-hearted and precious servants of Christ, the Albigenses and Waldenses, how they fell as a prey to their cruel adversaries, notwithstanding the convincing simplicity and holiness of their lives, and all their fervent cries and appeals to God; how the very flower of the reformed Protestant interest in France was cut off with more than barbarous inhumanity, so that the streets were washed, and the canals of Paris ran with their precious blood. What horrid and unparalleled torture the servants of God felt in that cruel massacre in Ireland, a history too tragical for a tender-hearted reader to stay long upon; and how, in our own land, the most

eminent ministers, and Christians, were sent to heaven in a fiery chariot, in those doleful Marian days: I say, when we read, and consider such things as these, it rouzes our fears, and puts us into frights, when we see ourselves threatened with the same enemies and danger; when the feet of them that carried out the dear servants of God in bloody winding-sheets to their graves, stand at the door, to carry us forth next, if providence loose their chain, and give them a permission so to do; and our fears, on this account, are heightened, by considering and involving these four things in our thoughts, which we are always more inclined to do, than the things that should fortify our faith, and heighten our Christian courage. As,

1. We are apt to consider, that as the same race, and kind of men, that committed these outrages upon our brethren, are still in being, and that their rage, and malice, is not abated, in the least degree, but is as fierce, and cruel, as ever it was. Gal. iv. 29. "As then he that was born after the flesh persecut-"ed him that was born after the spirit, even so it is now." So it was then, and just so it is still: the old enmity is entailed upon all wicked men, from generation to generation. *Multi adhuc qui clavum sanguine Abelis rubentem adhuc circumferunt*, Cain's Club is to this day carried up and down the world, stained with the blood of Abel, as Bucholtzer speaks. It is a rooted antipathy, and it runs in a blood, and will run, as long as there are wicked men, from whom, and to whom it shall be propagated, and a devil in hell, by whom it will not fail to be exasperated, and irritated.

2. We know, also, that nothing hinders the execution of their wicked purposes against us, but the restraints of providence; should God loose the chain, and give them leave to act forth the malice, and rage that is in their hearts, no pity would be shewn by them, or could be rationally expected from them, Psal. cxxiv. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. We live among lions, and them that are set on fire of hell, Psal. lvii. 4. The only reason of our safety is this, that he who is the keeper of the lions, is, also the shepherd of the sheep.

3. We find, that God hath many times let loose these lions upon his people, and given them leave to tear his lambs in pieces, and suck the blood of his saints: how well soever he loves them, yet hath he often delivered them into the hands of their enemies, and suffered them to perpetuate, and act the greatest cruelties upon them; the best men have suffered the worst things, and the histories of all ages have delivered down unto us the most tragical relations of their barbarous usage.

4. We are conscious to ourselves, how far short we come, in holiness, innocency, and spiritual excellency, of those excellent persons who have suffered these things; and therefore have no ground to expect more favour from providence, than they found: we know, also, there is no promise in the scriptures, to which they had not as good a claim, and title, as ourselves. With us are found as great, yea, greater sins, than in them; and therefore have no reason to please ourselves with the fond imaginations of extraordinary exemptions. If we think these evils shall not come in our days, it is like many of them thought so too; and yet they did, and we may find it quite otherwise. Lam. iv. 12. "Who would have thought that the enemy "should have entered in at the gates of Jerusalem?" The revolving of these, and such like considerations, in our thoughts, and mixing our own unbelief with them, creates a world of fears, even in good men, till, by resignation of all to God, and acting faith upon the promises that assure us of the sanctification of all our troubles, as that Rom. viii. 28. God's presence with us in our troubles, as that Psal. xci. 15. his moderation of our troubles, to that measure, and degree, in which they are supportable, Isa. xxvii. 8. and the safe, and comfortable outlet, and final deliverance from them all at last; according to that in Rev. vii. 17. We do, at last, recover our hearts out of the hands of our fears again, and compose them to a quiet, and sweet satisfaction in the wise, and holy pleasure of our God.

Cause 5. Our immoderate love of life, and the comforts, and conveniencies thereof, may be assigned as a proper, and real ground, and cause of our sinful fears, when the dangers of the times threaten the one, or the other: did we love our lives less, we should fear, and tremble less than we do. It is said of those renowned saints, Rev. xii. 11. "They overcame by the blood "of the Lamb, and by the word of the testimony, and they "loved not their lives unto the death."

They overcame not only the fury of their enemies without them, but their sinful fears within them; and this victory was atchieved by their mortification to the inordinate, and immoderate love of life. Certainly, their own fears had overcome them, if they had not first overcome the love of life: it was not, therefore, without very great reason, that our Lord enjoined it upon all his disciples, and followers, *to hate their own lives*, Luke xiv. 26. not absolutely, but in comparison, and competition with him, *i. e.* to love it in so remiss a degree, as to slight, and undervalue it, as a poor, low thing in such a comparison: he foresaw what sharp trials, and sufferings were

coming upon them, and he knew if the fond, and immoderate love of life were not overcome, and mortified in them, it would make them warp, and bend under such temptations.

This was it that freed Paul from slavish fears, and made him so magnanimous, and undaunted; indeed he had less fear upon his spirits, tho' he was to suffer those hard, and sharp things, in his own person, than his friends had, who only sympathized with him, and were not farther concerned, than by their own love, and pity: he spake like a man who was rather a spectator, than a sufferer. Acts xx. 24, 25. "None of these things move "me," saith he. Great soul! not moved with bonds, and afflictions! how did he attain so great courage, and constancy of mind, in such deep, and dreadful sufferings! It was enough to have moved the stoutest man in the world, yea, and to have removed the resolutions of any that had not loved Christ better than his own life: but life was a trifle to him, in comparison with Jesus Christ, for so he tells us in the next words, "I count "not my life dear unto me," *q. d.* It is a low-prized commodity in my eyes, not worth the saving, or regarding on such sinful terms. Oh! how many have parted with Christ, peace, and eternal life, for fear of losing that which Paul regarded not. And if we bring our thoughts closer to the matter, we shall soon find that this is a fountain of fears in times of danger, and that from this excessive love of life we are racked and tortured with ten thousand terrors. For,

1. Life is the greatest and nearest interest men naturally have in this world, and that which wraps up all other inferior interests in itself, Job ii. 4. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath, "will he give for his life." It is a real truth, thought it came from the mouth of the father of lies; afflictions never touch the quick, till they touch the life; liberty, estates, and other accommodations in this world receive their value and estimation from hence; if life be cut off, these accidents perish, and are of no account, Gen. xxv. 32. "Behold I am at the point to die, "(said Esau) and what profit shall this birth-right do to me?"

2. Life being naturally the dearest interest of men in this world, the richest treasure, and most beloved thing on earth, to a natural man; that which strikes at, and endangers life, must, in his eyes, be the greatest evil that can befal him; on this account death becomes terrible to men; yea, as Job calls it, the *king of terrors*, Job xviii. 14. The black prince, or the prince of clouds and darkness, as some translate those words: Yea, so is terrible is death upon this account, that the very fear of it hath some-

times precipitated men into the hands of it, as we sometimes observe in times of pestilence, the excessive fear of the plague hath induced it *.

3. Though death be terrible in any shape, in the mildest form it can appear in; yet a violent and bloody death, by the hands of cruel and mercilefs men, is the most terrible form that death can appear in; it is now the king of terrors indeed, in the most ghastly representation and frightful form, in its scarlet robes, and terrifying formalities; in a violent death, all the barbarous cruelty that the wit of our enemies can invent, or their malice inflict, is mingled together; in a violent death are many deaths converted into one, and it oftentimes approaches men by such slow and deliberated paces, that they feel every tread of its foot, as it advanceth towards them. *Moriatur, ut sentiat se mori;* Let him so die, (said the tyrant) that he may feel himself to die; yea, and how he dies by inch-meal, or slow, lingering degrees and this is exceeding frightful, especially to those that are of most soft and tender nature and temper who must needs be struck through with the terrors of death, except, the Lord arm them against it with the assurance of a better life, and sweeten these bitter apprehensions by the foretastes of it. This is enough to put even sanctified nature into consternation, and make a very gracious heart to sink, unless it be so upheld by divine strength and comfort: And hence come many, very many of our fears and terrors, especially when the same enemies that have been accustomed to this bloody work, shall be found confederating and designing again to break in upon us, and act over again as much cruelty, as ever they have done upon our brethren in times past.

Cause 6. To conclude: many of our sinful fears and consternations flow from the influences of Satan upon our phantasies. They say winds, and storms are oft-times raised by Satan, both by sea and land; and I never doubted, but the prince of the power of the air, by God's permission, can, and often doth, put the world into great frights and disturbances by such tempests, Job. i. 19. He can raise the loftiest winds, pour down roaring showers, rattle in the air with fearful claps of thunder, and scare

* Galen reports, that some have died suddenly through fear: It is not therefore a thing to be wondered at, in the opinion of Aristotle, and almost all others, that a man should die, through the fear of death. The fear of evil sometimes brings on men that which they dread; as is evident from the example of those whose fear has prevented the death appointed them by the judge. *Stern. on Death*, p. 167.

the lower world with terrible flashes of lightning. And I doubt not but he hath, by the same permission, a great deal of influence and power upon the fancies and passions of men; and can raise more terrible storms and tempests within us, than ever we heard or felt without us: he can by leave from God, approach our phantasies, disturb and trouble them exceedingly by forming frightful ideas there; for Satan not only works upon men mediately, by the ministry of their external senses, but by reason of his spiritual, angelical nature, he can have immediate access to the internal sense also, as appears by diabolical dreams; and by practising upon that power of the soul, he influences the passions of it, and puts it under very dreadful apprehensions and consternations. Now if Satan can provoke and exasperate the fury and rage of wicked men, as it is evident he can do, as well as he can go to the magazines and store-houses of thunder, lightnings, and storms: O what inward storms of fear can he shake our hearts withal, and if God give him but a permission, how ready will he be to do it, seeing it is so conducible to his design: for by putting men into such frights, he at once weakens their hands in duty, as is plain from his attempt his way upon Nehemiah, chap. vi. 13. and if he prevail there, he drives them into the snares and trains of his temptations, as the fisherman and fowler do the birds and fishes into their nets, when once they have flushed and frighted them out of their covers. And thus you have some account of the principal and true causes of our sinful fears.

CHAP. V.

Laying open the sinful and lamentable effects of slavish and inordinate fear, both in carnal and regenerate persons.

Sect. I. HAVING taken a view in the former chapters of the kinds and causes of fear, and seen what lies at the root of slavish fear, and both breeds and feeds it, what fruit can we expect from such a cursed plant, but gall and wormwood, fruit as bitter as death itself? Let us then, in the next place, examine and well consider these following and deplorable effects of fear, to excite us to apply ourselves the more concernedly to those directions that follow in the close of this treatise, for the cure of it. And,

Effect 1. The first effect of this sinful and exorbitant passion is distraction of mind and thoughts in duty: Both Cicero and Quintilian will have the word *tumultus*, a tumult, to come from

timor multus, much fear, it is a compound of those two words; much fear raises great uproars and tumults in the soul, and puts all into hurries and distractions, so that we cannot attend upon any service of God, with profit or comfort. It was therefore a very necessary mercy that was requested of God, Luke i. 74. "That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, "might serve him without fear." For it is impossible to serve God without distractions, till we can serve him without the slavish fear of enemies. The reverential fear of God is the greatest spur to duty, and choicest help in it, but the distracting fears of men will either wholly divert us from our duty, or destroy the comfort and benefit of our duties; it is a deadly snare of the devil to hinder all comfortable intercourse with God.

It is very remarkable, that when the apostle was giving his advice to the Corinthians, about marriage in those times of persecution, and difficulty, he commends to them a single life as most eligible: Where it may be without sinful inconveniencies, and that principally for this reason, "That they might attend upon "the Lord without distraction," 1 Cor. vii. 35. He foresaw what straits, cares, and fears must unavoidably distract them in such times that were most clogged and incumbred with families and relations; when a man should be thinking, O what shall I do now to get my doubts and fears resolved about my interest in Christ? How may I so behave myself in my sufferings as to credit religion, and not become a scandal and stumbling-stone to others? His thoughts are taken up with other cares and fears: O what will become of my wife and poor little ones? What shall I do with them, and for them, to secure them from danger.

I doubt not but it is a great design of the devil to keep us in continual alarms and frights, and to puzzle our heads and hearts with a thousand difficulties, which possibly may never befal us, or if they do, shall never prove so fatal to us as we fancy them, and all this is to unfit us for our present duties, and destroy our comfort therein; for if by frights and terrors of mind he can but once distract our thoughts, he gains three great points upon us, to our unspeakable loss.

1. Hereby he will cut off the freedom and sweetness of our communion with God in duties, and what an empty shell will the best duties be, when this kernel is wormed out by such a subtle artifice? Prayer, as Damascen aptly expresses it is Ἀνάβασις νοῦ πρὸς θεόν, the ascension of the mind or soul to God; but distraction clips its wings; he can never offer up his soul and thoughts to God, that hath not the possession of them himself;

and he that is under distracting fears possesseth not himself. The life of all communion with God in prayer, consists in the harmony that is betwixt our hearts and words, and both with the will of God; this harmony is spoiled by distractions, and so Satan gains that point.

2. But this is not all he gains, and we lose, by distracting fears; for as they cut off the freedom and sweetness of our intercourse with God in prayer, so they cut off the soul from the succours and reliefs it might otherwise draw from the promises. We find when the Israelities were in great bondage, wherein their minds were distracted with fears and sorrows, they regarded not the supporting promises of deliverance sent them by Moses, Exod. vi. 3. David had an express and particular promise of the kingdom from the mouth of God, which must needs include his deliverance out of the hand of Saul, and all his stratagems to destroy him; but yet, when eminent hazards were before his eyes, he was afraid, and that fear betrayed the succours from the promise, so that it drew a quite contrary conclusion, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. "I shall one day perish by the hand of Saul:" And again he is at the same point, Psal. cxvi. 11. "All men "are liars," not excepting Samuel himself, who had assured him of the kingdom. This is always the property and nature of fear (as I shewed before) to make men distrust the best security when they are in eminent peril: But oh! what a mischief is this to make us suspicious of the promises, which are our chief relief and support in times of trouble: Our fears will unfit us for prayer, they will also shake the credit of the promises with us; and so great is the damage we receive both ways, that it were better for us to lose our two eyes, than two such advantages in trouble. But,

3. This is not all, by our present fears, we lose the benefit and comfort of all our past experiences, and the singular relief we might have from all that faithfulness and goodness of God, which our eyes have seen in former straights and dangers, the present fear clouds them all, Isa. li. 12, 13. Men and dangers are so much minded, that God is forgotten, even the God that hath hitherto preserved us, though our former fears told us, the enemy was daily ready to devour us. All these sweet reliefs are cut off from us by our distracting fears, and that at a time when we have most need of them.

Effect 2. Dissimulation and hypocrisy are the fruit of slavish fear; distraction you see is bad enough, but dissimulation is worse than distraction, and yet as bad as it is, fear hath driven good men into this snare; it will make even an upright soul

warp and bend from the rules of that integrity and candor, which should be inseparable at all times from a Christian: of whom (saith God to his Israel) hast thou been afraid, that thou hast lied, and hast not remembered me? God finds falshood, and charges it upon fear, *q. d.* I know it was against the resolutions of my people's hearts thus to dissemble, this certainly is the effect of a fright; who is he that hath scared you into this evil? It was Abraham's fear that made him dissemble to the reproach of his religion, Gen. xx. 2, 11. And indeed it was but an odd sight to see an heathen so schooling and reproving great Abraham about it, as he there doth.

It was nothing but fear that drew his son Isaac into the like snare, Gen. xxvi. 7. And it was fear that overcame Peter against his promise, as well as principle, to say concerning his dear Saviour, *I know not the man*, Matth. xxvi. 69. Had Abraham at that time remembered, and acted his faith freely upon what the Lord said to him, Gen. xvii. 1. *Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield*, he had escaped both the sin and the shame into which he fell, but even that great believer was foiled by his own fears; and certainly this is a great evil, a complicated mischief. For,

1. By these falls and scandals, religion is made vile and contemptible in the eyes of the world, it reflects with much reproach upon God and his promises, as if his word were not sufficient security for us to rely upon in times of trouble, as if it were safer trusting to our wit, yea, to sin, than to the promises.

2. It greatly weakens the hands of others, and proves a sore discouragement to them in their trials, to see their brethren faint for fear, and ashamed to own their principles; sometimes it hath this mischievous effect, but it is always improved by Satan and wicked men to this purpose. And,

3. It will be a terrible blow and wound to our own consciences, for such flaws in our integrity we may be kept waking and sighing many a night; O see the mischiefs of a timorous and faint spirit!

Effect 3. Slavish fears of the creature exceedingly strengthen our temptations in times of danger, and make them very efficacious and prevalent upon us, Prov. xxix. 25. *The fear of man brings a snare.* Satan spreads the net, but we are not within its reach, till our own fears drive us into it; the recoiling of our spirits from some imminent dangers, may cause the pulse of a true Christian to intermit and faulter, how regular soever it beats at other times; this will cause great trepidation and timi-

duty in men that are sincere and upright, and that is it that brings the snare over their souls. Aaron was a good man, and idolatry he knew to be a great sin, yet fear prevailed with that good man to give too much way to that great evil, Exod. xxxii. 22. *Thou knowest the people that they are set upon mischief*, saith he, in his own excuse in the matter of the golden calf, *q. d.* Lord, I durst do no otherwise at that time, the people were violently and passionately set upon it; had I resisted them, it might have cost me dear.

It was fear that prevailed with Origen to yield so far as he did in offering incense to the *idol*, the consideration of which fact brake his heart to pieces. It was nothing but fear that made David play the fool, and act so dishonourably as he did, 1 Sam. xxi. 12. Fear is a snare in which Satan hath caught as many souls as in any other of his stratagems and snares whatsoever.

It were easy to give instances, so many and so sad, as would enlarge this head even to tediousness, but I chuse rather to come to the particulars, wherein the danger of this snare of the devil consists. And,

1. Herein lies the ensnaring danger of sinful fear, that it drives men out of their proper station, out of their place and duty, beside which there is none to be found, but what is Satan's ground. The subtle enemy of our salvation is aware that we are out of gun-shot, beyond his reach, whilst we abide with God in the way of our duty, that the Lord is with us, whilst we are with him, and there is no attempting our ruin, under the wings of his protection. If ever, therefore, he meaneth to do any thing upon us, he must get us off that ground, and from under those wings; and there is nothing like fear to do this: then we are as the birds that are wandering from their nests, Prov. xxvii. 8. or like Shimei out of his limits.

2. Fear is usually the first passion in the soul that beats a parley with the enemy, and treats with the tempter about terms of rendition; and, as the French proverb is, *The castle that parleys, is half won.* It is fear that consults with flesh and blood, whilst faith is engaged with God for the supply of strength to endure the siege. We have a sad, and doleful instance of this in Spira; he tells us how his own fears betrayed him, by parleying with the tempter: for thus Mr. Bacon, in the history of his life, records the occasion of his fall. 'Whilst 'Spira ws tossing upon the restless waves of doubts, without 'guide to trust to, or haven to flee for succour, on a sudden, 'God's spirit assisting, he felt a calm, and began to discourse 'with himself in this manner:' 'Why wanderest thou thus

" in uncertainties? Unhappy man! cast away fear, put on thy " shield of faith; where is thy wonted courage, thy goodness, " thy constancy? Remember that Christ's glory lies at the stake, " suffer then without fear, and he will defend thee, he will tell " thee what thou shalt answer; he can beat down all danger, " bring thee out of prison, raise thee from the dead; consider " Peter in the dungeon, the martyrs in the fire, &c."

' Now was Spira in reasonable quiet, being resolved to yield ' to those weighty reasons; yet holding it wisdom to examine ' all things, he consults, also, with flesh, and blood; thus the ' battle renews, and the flesh begins, in this manner: ' Be well " advised, fond man, consider reasons on both sides, and then " judge: how canst thou thus overween thine own sufficiency, " as thou neither regardest the examples of thy progenitors, " nor the judgment of the whole church? Dost thou not con- " sider what misery this day's rashness will bring thee unto? " Thou shalt lose all thy substance gotten with so much care, " and travail, thou shalt undergo the most exquisite torments " that malice itself can devise, thou shalt be counted an heretic " of all, and to close up all, thou shalt die shamefully. What " thinkest thou of the loathsome stinking dungeon, the bloody " ax, the burning faggot? Are they delightful? *&c.*" Thus through fear he first parleyed with the tempter, consulted with flesh and blood, and at last fainted, and yielded.

3. It is fear that makes men impatient of waiting God's time, and method of deliverance, and so precipitates the soul, and drives it into the snare of the next temptation. Isa. li. 14. " The " captive exile hasteth to be delivered out of the pit." Any way, or means of escape, that comes next to hand, saith fear, is better than to lie here in the pit; and when the soul is thus prepared, by its own fears, it becomes an easy prey to the next temptation; by all which you see the mischief that comes by fear, in times of danger.

Effect 4. Fear naturally produceth pusillanimity and cowardliness in men, a poor, low spirit, that presently faints, and yields upon every slight assault. It extinguisheth all Christian courage, and magnanimity, where-ever it prevails; and therefore you find it joined, frequently in the scriptures, with discouragement. Deut. i. 21. " Fear not, neither be discouraged, " with fainting, and trembling." Deut. xx. 3. " Let not your " hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble;" with dismayedness, Deut. xxxi. 6. and faint-heartedness, Isa. vii. 4. these are the effects, and consequents of sinful fear. And how dangerous a thing it is, to have our courage extinguished, and faint-

ness of heart prevail upon us, in a time when we have the greatest need, and use of courage, and our perseverance, peace, and eternal happiness rely, and depend so much upon it, let all serious Christians judge. It is sad to us, and dishonourable to religion, to have the hearts of women, as it is said of Egypt, Isa. xix. 16. when we should play the men, as the apostle exhorts us, 1 Cor. xvi. 13. We find, in all ages, those that have manifested most courage for Christ in time of trial, have been those whose faith hath surmounted fear, and whose hearts were above all discouragements from this world.

Such a man was Basil, as appears by his answer to Valens, the emperor; who tempting him with offers of preferment, received this answer, *offer these things*, said he, *to children:* and when he threatened him with grievous sufferings, he replied; *Threaten these things to your purple gallants, that give themselves to pleasure, and are afraid to die.*

And this was the spirit of courage and magnanimity with which the generality of the primitive Christians were animated; they feared not the faces of tyrants, they shrunk not from the most cruel torments: and it redounded not a little to the credit of Christianity, when one of Julian's nobles, present at the tormenting of Marcus, bishop of Arethusa, told the apostate to his face, *We are ashamed, O emperor, the Christians laugh at your cruelty, and grow more resolute by it.* So Lactantius also testifies of them, *Our women and children*, saith he, *not to speak of men, overcame their torments, and the fire cannot fetch so much as a sigh from them.* If carnal fear once get the ascendant over us, all our courage and resolution will flag and melt away; we may suffer out of unavoidable necessity, but shall never honour Christ and religion by our sufferings.

Effect 5. Carnal fear is the very root of apostacy, it hath made thousands of professors to faint and fall away in the hour of temptation. It is not so much from the fury of our enemies without, as from our fears within, that temptations become victorious over us. From the beginning of fears, Christ dates the beginning of apostasy, Matth. xxiv. 9, 10. "Then shall "they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you, and ye "shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake, and then "shall many be offended." When troubles and dangers come to an height, then fears begin to work at an height too, and then is the critical hour; fears are high, and faith is low; temptation strong, and resistance weak: Satan knocks at the door, and fear opens it, and yields up the soul to him, except

special aid and assistance come in seasonably from heaven; so long as we can profess religion without any great hazard of life, liberty, or estates, we may shew much zeal and forwardness in the ways of godliness: but when it comes to the sharps, to *resisting unto blood*, few will be found to own and assert it openly in the face of such dangers. The first retreat is usually made from a free and open, to a close and concealed practice of religion; not opening our windows, as Daniel did, to shew we care not who knows we dare worship our God, and are not ashamed of our duties, but hiding our principles and practice with all the art and care imaginable, reckoning it well if we can escape danger by letting fall our profession which might expose us to it: but if the inquest go on, and we cannot be secured any longer under this refuge, we must comply with false worship, and give some open signal that we do so, or else be marked out for ruin; then saith fear, Give a little more ground, and retreat to the next security, which is to comply seemingly with that which we do not allow, hoping God will be merciful to us, and accept us, if we keep our hearts for him, though we are forced thus to dissemble and hide our principles. *Eamus ad communem errorem*, said Calderinus, when going to the mass, Let us go to the common error; and, as Seneca adviseth about worshipping the Roman gods, *In animi religione non habeat, sed in actibus fingat;* let us make a semblance and shew of worshipping them, though our hearts give no religious respect to them. But if still the temptation hunts us farther, and we come to be more narrowly sifted, and put to a severer test, by subscribing contrary articles, or renouncing our former avowed principles, and that upon penalty of death, and loss of all that is dear to us in this world; now nothing in all the world hazards our eternal salvation, as our own fears will do; this is like to be the rock on which we shall split all, and make an horrible shipwreck both of truth and peace. This was the case of Cranmer, whose fears caused him to subscribe against the dictates of his own conscience, and cowardly to betray the known truth; and indeed there is no temptation in the world that hath overthrown so many, as that which hath been backed and edged with fear; the love of preferments and honours hath slain its thousands, but fear of sufferings its ten thousands.

Effect 6. Sinful fear puts men under great bondage of spirit, and makes death a thousand times more terrible and intolerable than it would otherwise be to us. You read of some, Heb. ii. 16. "who through the fear of death were all their life-time subject to bondage," *i. e.* it kept them in a miserable anxiety and

perplexity of mind, like slaves that tremble at the whip which is held over them; thus many thousands live under the lash; so terrible is the name of Death, especially a violent death, that they are not able with patience to hear it mentioned; which gave the ground of that saying, *Praestat semel, quam semper mori*; it is better to die once, than to be dying always. And surely there is not a more miserable life any poor creature can live, than such a trembling life as this is. For,

1. Such a bondage as this destroys all the comfort and pleasure of life; no pleasure can grow or thrive under the shadow of this cursed plant. *Nil ei beatum cui semper aliquis terror impendet*, saith Cicero *, all the comforts we possess in this world are embittered by it. It is storied of Democles, a flatterer of Dionysius the tyrant, that he told him he was the happiest man in the world, having wealth, power, majesty, and abundance of all things: Dionysius sets the flatterer in all his own pomp at a table furnished with all dainties, and attended upon as a king, but with a heavy sharp sword hanging by a single horse hair right over his head; this made him quake and tremble, so that he could neither eat nor drink, but desired to be freed from that estate. The design was to convince him how miserable a life they live, who live under the continual terrors of impending death and ruin. It was a sore judgment which God threatened against them in Jer. v. 6. "A lion out "of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evening "shall spoil them; a leopard shall watch over their cities, every "one that goeth out thence, shall be torn in pieces." What a miserable life must those people live, who could not stir out of the city, but they presently were seized by lions, wolves, and leopards, that watched over them, and lurked in all the avenues to make them a prey! and yet this is more tolerable than for a man's own fear to watch continually over him.

2. And yet I could wish this were the worst of it, and that our fears destroyed no better comforts than the natural comforts of this life: but, alas, they also destroy our spiritual comforts, which we might have from God's promises, and our own and others experiences, which are incomparably the sweetest pleasures men have in this world: but as no creature-comfort is pleasant, so no promise relishes like itself to him that lives in this bondage of fear; when the terrors of death are great, the consolations of the Almighty are small.

* Cicer. Tusc. Q. 15.

In the written word are found all sorts of refreshing, strengthening, and heart-reviving promises, prepared by the wisdom and care of God for our relief in the days of darkness and trouble; promises of support under the heaviest burdens and pressures, Isa. xli. 10. "Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will "help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of my "righteousness." A promise able to make the most timorous and trembling soul to shout with the joy of men in harvest, or as they that divide the spoil.

There are found the encouraging promises of defence and protection, Isa. xxvii. 2, 3. and Isa. xxxiii. 2. promises that lead us unto the almighty power of God, and put us under the wings of his care in time of danger.

Promises of moderation and mitigation in the day of sharp affliction that we may be able to bear it, Isa. xxvii. 8. 1 Cor. x. 13. Promises of deliverance out of trouble, if the malice of man bring us into trouble, the mercy of God will assuredly bring us out, Psal. xci. 14, 15. and Psal. cxxv. 3. And, which is most comfortable of all the rest, promises to sanctify and bless our troubles to our good, so that they shall not only cease to be hurtful, but, by virtue of the promise, become exceeding beneficial to us, Isa. xxvii. 9. Rom. viii. 28.

All these promises are provided by our tender Father for us, against a day of straits and fears; and because he knew our weakness, and how apt our fears would be to make us suspect our security by them, he hath, for the performance of them, engaged his wisdom, power, care, faithfulness and unchangeableness, 2 Pet. ii. 9. Isa. xxvii. 2, 3. 2 Cor. xvi. 9. 1 Cor. x. 13. Isa. xliii. 1, 2. In the midst of such promises so sealed, how chearful and magnanimous should we be in the worst times! and say as David, Psal. xlix. 5. "Why should I fear in the day "of evil?" Let those that have no God to flee to, no promise to rely upon, let them fear in the day of evil, I have no cause to do so. But even from these most comfortable refuges in the promises our own fears beat us; we are so scared that we mind them not, so as to draw encouragement, resolution, and courage from them. Thus the shields of the mighty are vilely cast away.

So, for all the choice records of the saints experiences in all former troubles and distresses, God hath, by a singular providence (aiming at our relief in future distresses) preserved them for us; if danger threaten us, we may turn to the recorded experiences his people have left us of the strange and mighty influence of

his providence upon the hearts of their enemies, to shew them favour, Gen. xxxi. 29. Psal. xvi. 46. Jer. xv. 11.

There are also found the antient rolls and records of the admirable methods of his peoples deliverance, contrived by his infinite and unsearchable wisdom for them, when all their own thoughts have been at a loss, and their understandings posed and staggered, Exod. xv. 6. 2 Chron. xx. 12, 15. 2 Kings xix. 3, 7.

There are the recorded experiences of God's unspotted faithfulness, which never failed any soul that durst trust himself in its arms, Micah vi. 4, 5. Joshua vii. 9.

There are also to be found the records of his tender and most fatherly care for his children, who have been to him as a peculiar treasure in times of danger, Psal. xl. 17. Deut. xxxii. 10, 11, 12. Isa. xlix. 16. Job xlix. 16. Job xxxvi. 7. 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

All these and many more supports and cordials are made ready to our hand, and provided for a day of trouble; but alas! to what purpose, if our own fears so transport us, that we can neither apply them, nor so much as calmly ponder and consider them.

3. To conclude, by these fears we are deprived of those manifold advantages we might gain by the calm, and composed meditations of our own death, and the change it will make upon us; could we sit down in peace, and meditate in a familiar way upon death: could we look with a composed and well-settled mind into our own graves, and not be scared and frighted with the thoughts of death, and startle whenever we take it (though but in our thoughts) by the cold hand: To what seriousness would those meditations frame us? And what abundance of evils would they prevent in our conversations? The sprinkling of dust upon new writing prevents many a blot and blur in our books or letters: And could we thus sprinkle the dust of the grave upon our minds, it would prevent many a sin and miscarriage in our words and actions. But there is no profit or advantage redounding to us either from promises, experiences, or death itself, when the soul is discomposed and put into confusion by its own fears. And thus you see some of those many mischievous effects of your own fears.

CHAP. VI.

Prescribing the rules to cure our sinful fears, and prevent those sad and woful effects of them.

Sect. I. WE are now come to the most difficult part of the work, *viz.* the cure of the sinful and slavish fear of creatures in times of danger, which if it might, through the blessing of God, be effected, we might live at hearts ease in the midst of all our enemies and troubles, and, like the sun in the heavens, keep on our steddy course in the darkest and gloomiest day. But before I come to the particular rules, it will be necessary, for the prevention of mistakes, to lay down three useful cautions about this matter.

1 *Caution.* Understand that none but those that are in Christ are capable to improve the following rules to their advantage. The security of our souls is the greatest argument used by Christ to extinguish our fears of *them that kill the body*, Mat. x. 28. But if the soul must unavoidably perish when the body doth, if it must drop into hell before the body be laid in the grave, if he that kills the body doth, by the same stroke, cut off the soul from all the means and possibilities of mercy and happiness for ever, what can be offered in such a case, to relieve a man against fear and trembling?

2 *Caution.* Expect not a perfect cure of your fears in this life, whilst there are enemies and dangers, there will be some fears working in the best hearts: If our faith could be perfected, our fears would be perfectly cured; but whilst there is so much weakness in our faith, there will be too much strength in our fears. And for those who are naturally timorous, who have more of this passion in their constitution than other men have, and those in whom melancholy is a rooted and chronical disease, it will be hard for them totally to rid themselves of fears and dejections, though in the use of such helps and means as follow, they may be greatly relieved against the tyranny of them, and enabled to possess their souls in much more tranquillity and comfort.

3 *Caution.* Whosoever expects the benefit of the following prescriptions and rules, must not think the reading, or bare remembring of them will do the work, but he must work them into his heart by believing and fixed meditation, and live in the daily practice of them. It is not our opening of our case to a physician, nor his prescriptions and written directions, that will

cure a man, but he muſt reſolve to take the bitter and naſeous potion, how much ſoever he loath it; to abſtain from hurtful diet, how well ſoever he loves it, if ever he expect to be a ſound and healthful man. So it is in this caſe alſo. Theſe things premiſed, the

1 *Rule.* The firſt rule to relieve us againſt our ſlaviſh fears, *Is ſeriouſly to conſider, and more thoroughly to ſtudy the covenant of grace, within the bleſſed claſp and bond whereof all believers are.* I think the clear underſtanding of the nature, extent, and ſtability of the covenant, and of our intereſt therein, would go a great way in the cure of our ſinful and ſlaviſh fears.

A covenant is more than a naked promiſe; in the covenant, God hath graciouſly conſulted our weakneſs, fears, and doubts, and therefore proceeds with us in the higheſt way of ſolemnity, confirming his promiſes by oath, Heb. vi. 13, 17. and by his ſeals, Rom. vi. 11. Putting himſelf under the moſt ſolemn ties and engagements that can be, to his people, that from ſo firm a ratification of the covenant with us, we might have ſtrong conſolation, Heb. vi. 18. He hath ſo ordered it, that it might afford ſtrong ſupports, and the moſt reviving cordials to our faint and timorous ſpirits, in all the plunges of trouble both from within, and from without. In the covenant God makes over himſelf to his people, to be unto them a God, Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10. Wherein the Lord beſtows himſelf in all his glorious eſſential properties upon us, to the end that whatſoever his almighty power, infinite wiſdom, and incomprehenſible mercy can afford for our protection, ſupport, deliverance, direction, pardon, or refreſhment; we might be aſſured ſhall be faithfully performed to us in all the ſtraits, fears, and exigencies of our lives. This God expects we ſhould improve by faith, as the moſt ſovereign antidote againſt all our fears in this world, Iſa. xliii. 1, 2. "Thus ſaith the Lord that created thee, "O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Iſrael; fear not, for I "have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name, thou "art mine; when thou paſſeſt through the waters, I will be "with thee," *&c.* Iſa. xli. 10. "Fear not, for I am with thee, "be not diſmayed, for I am thy God."

And if thou, reader, be within the bonds of the covenant, thou mayeſt ſurely find enough there to quiet thy heart, whatever the matter or ground of thy fears be: If God be thy covenant God, he will be with thee in all thy ſtraits, wants, and troubles, he will never leave, nor forſake thee. From the covenant it was that David encouraged himſelf againſt all his troubles, 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. "Although my houſe be not ſo with God, yet

" hath he made with me an everlasting covenant, well ordered " in all things and sure; this is all my salvation, and all my " desire, though he make it not to grow." He could fetch all reliefs, all comforts, and salvation out of it, and why cannot we? He desired no more for the support of his heart; *this is all my desire;* and sure if we understood and believed it as he did, we could desire no more to quiet and comfort our hearts than what this covenant affords us. For,

1. Are we afraid what our enemies will do? We know we are in the midst of potent, politic, and enraged enemies; we have heard what they have done, and see what they are preparing to do again. We tremble to think what bloody tragedies are like to be acted over again in the world by their cruel hands: But O what heroic and noble acts of faith should the covenant of God enable thee to exert amidst all these fears? If God be thy God, then thou hast an Almighty God on thy side, and that is enough to extinguish all these fears, Psal. cxviii. 6. " The Lord is " on my side, I will not fear what man can do unto me." Your fears come in the name of man, but your help in the name of the Lord: Let them plot, threaten, yea, and smite too; God is a shield to all that fear him, and if God be for us, who can be against us?

2. Are we afraid what God will do? fear it not, your God will do nothing against your good; think not that he may forget you, it cannot be; sooner may a tender mother forget her sucking child, Isa. xlix. 15. no, no, " He withdraweth not his " eye from the righteous, Job. xxxvi. 7. His eyes are continually upon all the dangers and wants of your souls and bodies, there is not a danger or an enemy stirring against you, but his eye is upon it, 2 Chron. xvi. 9.

Are you afraid he will forsake and cast you off? It is true, your sins have deserved he should do so, but he hath secured you fully against that fear in his covenant, Jer. xxxii. 40. " I will " not turn away from them, to do them good." All your fears of God's forgetting or forsaking you, spring out of your ignorance of the covenant.

3. Are you afraid what you shall do? It is usual for the people of God to propose difficult cases to themselves, and put startling questions to their own hearts; and there may be an excellent use of them to rouze them out of security, put them upon the search and trial of their conditions and estates, and make preparation for the worst; but Satan usually improves it to a quite contrary end, to deject, affright, and discourage them. O if fiery trials should come, if my liberty and life

come once to be touched in earneſt, I fear I ſhall never have ſtrength to go on a ſtep farther in the way of religion: I am afraid I ſhall faint in the firſt encounter, I ſhall deny the words of the holy One, make ſhipwreck of faith and a good conſcience in the firſt guſt of temptation. I can hear, and pray, and profeſs; but I doubt I cannot burn, or bleed, or lie in a dungeon for Chriſt. If I can ſcarce run with footmen in the land of peace, how do I think to contend with horſes in theſe ſwellings of Jordan?

But yet all theſe are but groundleſs fears, either forged in thy own miſgiving heart, or ſecretly ſhuffled by Satan into it; for God hath abundantly ſecured thee againſt fear in this very particular, by that moſt ſweet, ſupporting, and bleſſed promiſe, annexed to the former, in the ſame text, Jer. xxxii. 40. "I will "put my fear into their hearts, that they ſhall not depart from "me." Here is another kind of fear, than that which ſo ſtartles thee, promiſed to be put into thy heart, not a fear to ſhake and undermine thy aſſurance, as this doth, but to guard and maintain it. And this is the fear that ſhall be enabled to vanquiſh and expel all thy other fears.

4. Or are you afraid what the church ſhall do? And what will become of the ark of God? Do you ſee a ſtorm gathering, winds begin to roar, the waves to ſwell; and are you afraid what will become of that veſſel the church, in which you have ſo great an intereſt?

It is an argument of the publicneſs and excellency of thy ſpirit, to be thus touched with the feeling ſenſe of the church's ſufferings, and dangers. Moſt men ſeek their own things, and not the things that are Chriſt's, Phil. ii. 21. But yet it is your ſin ſo to fear, as to ſink and faint under a ſpirit of deſpondency, and diſcouragement, which yet many good men are but too apt to do. I remember an excellent paſſage in a letter of * Luther's to Melancthon upon this very account. 'In private troubles, 'ſaith he, I am weaker, and thou art ſtronger; thou deſpiſeſt 'thy own life, but feareſt the public cauſe: but for the 'public I am at reſt, being aſſured that the cauſe is juſt and 'true, yea, that it is Chriſt's and God's cauſe. I am well nigh 'a ſecure ſpectator of things, and eſteem not any thing theſe 'fierce and threatning Papiſts can do. I beſeech thee by Chriſt, 'neglect not ſo divine promiſs and conſolations, where the 'ſcripture ſaith, Caſt thy care upon the Lord, wait upon the

* Epiſt. ad Melanct. *Anno* 1549.

'Lord, be strong, and he shall comfort thy heart.' † And in another epistle! 'I much dislike those anxious cares, which as 'thou writest do almost consume thee. It is not the greatness 'of the danger, but the greatness of thy unbelief. John Huss 'and others were under greater danger than we; and if it 'be great, he is great that orders it. Why do you afflict your-'self? if the cause be bad, let us renounce it; if it be good, 'why do we make him a liar who bids us be still? as if you 'were able to do any good by such unprofitable cares. I be-'seech thee, thou that in other things art valiant, fight a-'gainst thyself, thine own greatest enemy, that puts weapons 'into Satan's hand.'

You see how good men may be even overwhelmed with public fears; but certainly if we did well consider the bond of the covenant that is betwixt God and his people, we should be more quiet and composed. For by reason thereof it is, 1. That *God is in the midst of them*, Psal. xlvi. 1, 2, 3, 4. When any great danger threatened the reformed church in its tender beginning, in Luther's time, he would say, *Come let us sing the* xlvi. *Psalm*: and indeed it is a lovely song for such times; it bears the title of *A Song upon Alamoth*, or a song for the hidden ones, God is with them to cover them under his wings. 2. And it is plain matter of fact, evident to all the world, that no people under the heavens have been so long and so wonderfully preserved as the church hath been; it hath over-lived many bloody massacres, terrible persecutions, subtle and cruel enemies; still God hath preserved and delivered it, for his promises oblige him to do it, amongst which those two are signal and eminent ones, Jer. xxx. 11. Isa. xxvii. 3. And it is obvious to all that will consider things, that there are the self-same motives in God, and the self same grounds and reasons before him, to take care of his church and people, that ever were in him, or did ever lie before him from the beginning of the world. For (1.) The relation is still the same. What though Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, those renowned believers, be in their graves, and those that succeed be far inferior to them in grace and spiritual excellency; yet saith the church, *doubtless thou art our Father*. There is the same tie and bond betwixt the Father and the youngest weakest child in the family, as the eldest and strongest. (2.) His pity and mercy is still the same, for that endures for ever: his bowels yearn as tenderly over his people in their present, as ever they did in any past afflictions, or straits. (3.) The rage

† *Anno* 1530.

and malice of his and his peoples enemies is ſtill the ſame, they will reflect as blaſphemouſly and diſhonourably upon God now, ſhould he give up his people, as ever they did. Moſes's argument is as good now as ever it was, *What will the Egyptians ſay?* and ſo is Joſhua's too, *What wilt thou do unto thy great name?* Oh! if theſe things were more throughly ſtudied and believed, they would appeaſe many fears.

2. Rule. *Work upon your hearts the conſideration of the many miſchiefs and miſeries men draw upon themſelves and others, both in this world and that to come, by their own ſinful fears.*

1. The miſeries and calamities that ſinful fear brings upon men in this world are unſpeakable: this is it that hath plunged the conſciences of ſo many poor wretches into ſuch deep diſtreſſes; this it is that hath put them upon the rack, and made them roar like men in hell among the damned. Some have been recovered, and others have periſhed in theſe deeps of horror and deſpair. "* In the year 1550 there was at Ferrara in "Italy one Faninus, who by reading good books was by the "grace of God converted to the knowledge of the truth, where-"in he found ſuch ſweetneſs, that by conſtant reading, medi-"tation, and prayer, he grew ſo expert in the ſcriptures, that he "was able to inſtruct others; and though he durſt not go out "of the bounds of his calling to preach openly, yet by confe-"rence and private exhortations he did good to many. This "coming to the knowledge of the pope's clients, they appre-"hended and committed him to priſon, where he renounced "the truth, and was thereupon releaſed: but it was not long "before the Lord met with him for it; ſo as falling into hor-"rible torments of conſcience, he was near unto utter de-"ſpair; nor could he be freed from thoſe terrors, before he "had fully reſolved to venture his life more faithfully in the "ſervice of Chriſt."

Dreadful was that voice which poor Spira ſeemed to hear in his own conſcience, as ſoon as ever his ſinful fears had prevailed upon him to renounce the truth. "Thou wicked wretch, "thou haſt denied me, thou haſt renounced the covenant of "thine obedience, thou haſt broken thy vow; hence, apoſtate, "bear with thee the ſentence of thine eternal damnation." Preſently he falls into a ſwoon, quaking and trembling, and ſtill affirmed to his death, "That from that time he never found "any eaſe or peace in his mind;" but profeſſed, "that he was

* Clark's Examp. p. 27.

" captivated under the revenging hand of the Almighty God; " and that he continually heard the sentence of Christ, the just " judge against him; and that he knew he was utterly undone, " and could neither hope for grace, or that Christ should inter- " cede for him to the Father."

In our dreadful Marian days, Sir John Cheek, who had been tutor to King Edward VI. was cast into the Tower, and kept close prisoner, and there put to this miserable choice, *either to forego his life, or that which was more precious, his liberty of conscience*; neither could his liberty be procured by his great friends at any lower rate than to recant his religion: This he was very unwilling to accept of, 'till his hard imprisonment, joined with threats of much worse in case of his refusal, at last wrought so upon him, whilst he consulted with flesh and blood, as drew from him an *abrenunciation* of that truth which he had so long professed, and still believed: Upon this he was restored to his liberty, but never to his comfort; for the sense of his own apostacy, and the daily sight of the cruel butcheries exercised upon others for their constant adherence to the truth, made such deep impressions upon his broken spirit, as brought him to a speedy end of his life, yet not without some comfortable hopes at last.

Our own histories abound with multitudes of such doleful examples.

Some have been in such horror of conscience, that they have chosen strangling rather than life; they have felt that anguish of conscience that hath put them upon desperate resolutions, and attempts, against their own lives to rid themselves of it. This was the case of Peter Moon, who being driven by his own fears to deny the truth, presently fell into such horror of conscience, that seeing a sword hanging in his parlour, would have sheathed it in his own bowels. So Francis Spira, before-mentioned, when he was near his end, saw a knife on the table, and running to it, would have mischiefed himself, had not his friends provented him; thereupon he said, *Oh! that I were above God, for I know that he will have no mercy on me. He lay about eight weeks* (saith the historian) *in a continual burning, neither desiring, or receiving any thing but by force, and that without digestion, till he became as an anatomy; vehemently raging for drink, yet fearful to live long; dreadful of hell, yet coveting death; in a continual torment, yet his own tormentor; and thus consuming himself with grief and horror, impatience and despair, like a living man in hell, he represented an extraordinary example of God's justice and power, and so ended his miserable life.*

Surely it were good to fright ourselves by such dreadful examples out of our sinful fears; is any misery we can fear from the hands of man like this? Oh, reader! believe it, "it is "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God." Hadst thou ever felt the rage and efficacy of a wounded and distressed conscience, as these poor wretches felt it, no fears or threats of men should drive thee into such an hell upon earth as this is.

2. And yet, though this be a doleful case, it is not the worst case your own sinful fears will cast you into, except the Lord overcome and extinguish them in you by the fear of his name, they will not only bring you into a kind of hell upon earth, but into hell itself for evermore; for so the righteous God hath said in his word of truth, Rev. xxi. 8. "but the fearful and unbelieving, "&c. shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire "and brimstone, which is the second death." Behold here the martial law of heaven executed upon cowards and renegadoes, whose fears make them revolt from Christ in the time of danger. Think upon this, you timorous and faint-hearted professors: you cannot bear the thoughts of lying in a nasty dungeon, how will you lie then in the lake of fire and brimstone? You are afraid of the face and frowns of a man that shall die, but how will you live among devils? Is the wrath of man like the fury of God poured out? Is not the little finger of God heavier than the loins of all the tyrants in the world? remember what Christ hath said, Matth. x. 33. "But whosoever shall deny me be-"fore men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in "heaven." Reader, the time is coming when he that spake these words shall break out of heaven with a shout, accompanied with myriads of angels, and ten thousands of his saints, the heavens and the earth shall be in dreadful conflagrations round about him; the last trump shall sound, the graves shall open, the earth and sea shall give up the dead that are in them. Thine eyes shall see him ascend the awful throne of judgment, his faithful ones that feared not to own and appear for him in the face of all enemies and dangers, sitting on the bench, as assessors with him; and then to be disclaimed and renounced for ever by Jesus Christ, in the face of that great assembly, and proclaimed a delinquent, a traitor to him, that deniedst his name and truths, because of the frowns of a fellow-creature, long since withered as the grass. O how wilt thou be able to endure this! Now put both these together, in thy serious consideration, think on the terrors of conscience here, and the desperate horror of it in hell; this is a par-boiling, that as a roasting in the flames of God's insufferable wrath: these as some scalding drops sprink-

led before-hand upon thy conscience, that tender and sensible part of man; that as the lake burning for ever with fire and brimstone. Oh! who would suffer himself to be driven into all this misery, by the fears of these sufferings which can but touch the flesh; and for their duration, they are but for a moment?

Think, and think again upon those words of Christ, Mark viii. 35. "He that will save his life, shall lose it." It may be a prolonging of a miserable life, a life worse than death, even in thine own account; a life without the comfort or joy of life; a life ending in the second death; and all this for fear of a trifle, compared with what thou shalt afterwards feel in thine own conscience, and less than a trifle, *nothing*, compared with what thou must suffer from God for ever.

Rule 3. *He that will overcome his fears of sufferings, must foresee and provide before-hand for them.*

The fear of *caution* is a good cure to the fear of *distraction*; and the more of *that*, the less of *this*; *this* fear will cure *that*, as one fire draws forth another, Heb. xi. 7. "Noah being moved "with fear, prepared an ark." In which he provided as much for the rest and quiet of his mind, as he did for the safety of his person and family. That which makes evils so frightful as they are, is their coming by way of surprize upon us. Those troubles that find us secure, do leave us distracted and desperate. Presumption of continued tranquillity proves one of the greatest aggravations of misery. Trouble will lie heavy enough when it comes by way of expectation, but it is intolerable when it comes quite contrary to expectation. It will be the lot of Babylon to suffer the unexpected vials of God's wrath, and I wish none but she and her children may be so surprized. Rev. xviii. 7. Oh! It were well for us, if, in the midst of our pleasant enjoyments, we would be putting the difficultest cases to ourselves, and mingle a few such thoughts as these with all our earthly enjoyments and comforts.

I am now at ease in the midst of my habitation, but the time may be at hand when my habitation shall be in a prison. I see no faces at present but those of friends, full of smiles and honours; I may see none shortly but the faces of enemies, full of frowns and terrors. I have now an estate to supply my wants, and provide for my family; but this may shortly fall as a prey to the enemy, they may sweep away all that I have gathered, reap the fruits of all my labours.—*Impius has segetes.* I have yet my life given me for a prey; but, oh! how soon may it fall into cruel and blood-thirsty hands! I have no better security for these things than the martyrs had, who suffered the loss of all these

things for Christ's sake. A double advantage would result to us from such meditations as these, *viz.* the advantage,

1. Of acquaintance with
2. Of preparation for

} Troubles.

1. Hereby our thoughts would be better acquainted with these evils; and the more they are acquainted with, the less they will start and fright at them. We should not think it strange concerning the fiery trial, as it is 1 Pet. iv. 12. It is with our thoughts as it is with young colts; they start at every new thing they meet; but we cure them of it, by bringing them home to that they start at, and making them smell to it; better acquaintance cures this startling humour. The newness of evil *, saith a late grave and learned divine, is the cause of fear, when the mind itself hath had no preceding encounter with it, whereby to judge of its strength, nor example of another man's prosperous issue, to confirm its hopes in the like success: For, as I noted before out of the Philosoper †, experience is instead of armour, and is a kind of fortitude, enabling both to judge, and to bear troubles; for there are some things which are μορμολυκεια και προσωπεια, scare-crows and vizors, which children fear only out of ignorance; as soon as they are known they cease to be terrible.

I know our minds naturally reluctate, and decline such harsh and unpleasant subjects: It is hard to bring our thoughts to them in good earnest, and harder to dwell so long as is necessary to this end upon them. We had rather take a pleasant prospect of future felicity and prosperity in this world; of *multiplying our days as the sand, and at last dying quietly in our nest*, as Job speaks. Our thoughts run nimbly upon such pleasant fancies, like oiled wheels, and have need of trigging; but when they come into the deep and dirty ways of suffering, there they drive heavily, like Pharaoh's chariots dismounted from their wheels. But that which is most pleasant, is not always most useful and necessary; our Lord was well acquainted with griefs, tho' our thoughts be such great strangers to them; he often thought and spake of his sufferings, and of the bloody baptism with which he was to be baptized, Luke xii. 50. and he not only minded his own sufferings before-hand, but, when he perceived the fond imaginations and vain fancies of some that followed and professed him, deluding them with expectations of earthly prosperity and rest, he gave their thoughts a turn to

* Dr. Edward Reynolds.
† Epictetus.

this less pleasing, but more needful subject, the things they were to suffer for his name; instead of answering a foolish and groundless question, of sitting on his right and left hand, like earthly grandees, he rebukes the folly of the Questionist, and asks a less pleasing question, Mat. xx. 22. "But Jesus answered "and said, Ye know not what ye ask: are ye able to drink of "the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the bap- "tism that I shall be baptized with?" *q. d.* You do but abuse yourselves with such fond and idle dreams, there is other employment cut out for you in the purposes of God; instead of sitting upon thrones and tribunals, it would become you to think of being brought before them as prisoners to receive your doom and sentence to die for my sake; these thoughts would do you a great deal more service.

2. As such meditations would acquaint us better, so they would prepare us better, to encounter troubles and difficult things when they come. Readiness and preparation would subdue and banish our fears; we are never much scared with that for which our minds are prepared. There is the same difference in this case, as there is betwixt a soldier in complete armour, and ready at every point for his enemy; and one that is alarmed in his bed, who hath laid his clothes in one place, and his arms in another, when his enemy is breaking open his chamber-door upon him. It was not therefore without the most weighty reason, that the apostle presses us so earnestly, Eph. vi. 13, 14. "Take "unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to "withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand "therefore, having your lions girt about with truth, and having "on the breast plate of righteousness, and your feet shod with "the preparation of the gospel of peace." We see the benefit of such previsions and provisions for suffering, in that great example of courage and constancy, Acts xxi. 13., "I am ready, (saith "Paul) not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem." And the same courage and constancy remained in him, when he was entring the very lists, and going to lay his very neck upon the block, 2 Tim. iv. 6. "I am ready to be offered up, the time "of my departure is at hand." The word σπένδομαι, properly signifies a *libation* or drink-offering, wherein some conceive he alluded to the very kind of his own death, *viz.* by the sword: his heart was brought to that frame, that he could with as much willingness pour out his blood for Christ, as the priests used to pour out drink-offerings to the Lord. It is true, all the meditations and preparations in the world, made by us, are not sufficient in themselves to carry us through such difficult services; it is one

thing to see death as our fancy limns it out at a distance, and another thing to look death itself in the face. We can behold the painted lion without fear, but the living lion makes us tremble: but yet, tho' our suffering-strength comes not from our own preparations or forethoughts of death, but from God's gracious assistance; yet usually that assistance of his is communicated to us in and by the conscientious and humble use of these means; let us therefore be found waiting upon God for strength, patience, and resolutions to suffer as it becomes Christians, in the daily serious use of those means whereby he is pleased to communicate to his people.

Rule 4. *If ever you will subdue your own slavish fears, commit yourselves, and all that is yours, into the hands of God by faith.*

This rule is fully confirmed by that scripture, Prov. xvi. 3. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be "established." The greatest part of our trouble and burden, in times of danger, arises from the unsettledness and distraction of our own thoughts; and the way to calm and quiet our thoughts is to commit all to God. This rule is to be applied for this end and purpose, when we are going to meet death itself, and that in all its terrible formalities, and most frightful appearances, 1 Pet. iv. 19. "Let them that suffer according to the will of God "commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto "a faithful Creator." And if this committing act of faith be so useful at such a time, when the thoughts must be supposed to be in the greatest hurry, and fears in their full strength; much more will it establish the heart, and calm its passions in lesser troubles. You know what ease and relief it would be to you, if you had a trial depending in law for your estates, and your hearts were overloaded and distracted with cares and fears about the issue of it: if one whom you know to be very skilful and faithful, should say to you at such a time, trouble not yourself any farther about this business, never break an hour's sleep more for this matter; be you an unconcerned spectator, commit it to me, and trust me with the management of it; I will make it my own concernment, and save you harmless. O what a burden, what an heavy load would you feel yourselves eased of, as soon as you had thus transferred and committed it to such a hand! then you would be able to eat with pleasure, and sleep in quietness: much more ease and quietness doth your committing the matter of your fears to God give, even so much more as his power, wisdom, and faithfulness is greater than what is

to be found in men. But to make this rule practicable, and improvable to peace and quietness of heart in an evil day, it will be necessary that you well understand,

1. *What the committing act of faith is.*

2. *What grounds and encouragements believers have for it.*

1. Study well the nature of this committing act of faith, and what it supposes or implies in it; for all men cannot commit themselves to God, it is his own people only that can do it: nor is it every thing they can commit to God; they cannot commit themselves to his care and protection in any way but only in his own ways. Know more particularly,

1*st*, That he, who will commit himself to God, must commit himself to him in well-doing, as the apostle limits it in 1 Pet. iv. 19. and in things agreeable to his will; else we would make God a patron and protector of our sins: *Let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing.* We cannot commit our sins, but our duties, to God's protection; God is so great a friend to truth and righteousness, that in such a case he will not take your part, how dear soever you be to him, if truth be found on your enemies part, and the mistake on yours. Think not to entitle God to your errors and failings, much less to any sinful designs; you may commit a doubtful case to him to be decided, but not a sinful case to be protected. It is in vain to shelter any cause of your own under his wings, except you can write upon it, as David did, Psal. lxxiv. 22. *Thine own cause, O Lord, as well as mine.* Lord, plead thine own cause.

2*dly*, He that commits his all to God, supposes and firmly believes that all events and issues of things are in God's hands; that he only can direct, over-rule, and order them all as he pleaseth. Upon this supposition the committing acts of faith in all our fears and distresses are built: *I trusted in thee, O Lord, I said, Thou art my God, my times are in thy hand, deliver me from the hands of my enemies, and from them that persecute me.* His firm assent to this great truth, *That his times were in God's hands*, was the reason why he committed himself into that hand. If our times, or lives, or comforts were in our enemies hands, it were to little purpose for us to commit ourselves into God's hands. And here the contrary senses and methods of faith and unbelief are as conspicuous as in any one thing whatsoever: unbelief persuades men that their lives, and all that is dear to them is in the hands of their enemies, and therefore persuades them the best way they can take to secure themselves, is by compliance with the will of their enemies, and

pleasing them: but faith determines quite contrary, it tells us, *We and all that is ours, is in God's hand, and no enemy can touch us, or ours, till he give them a permission; and therefore it is our duty and interest to please him, and commit all to him.*

3. The committing ourselves to God, implies the resignation of our wills to the will of God, to be disposed of as seems good in his eyes: So David commits to God the event of that sad and doubtful providence, which made him fly for his life, from a strong conspiracy, 2 Sam. xv. 25. "And the king said "unto Zadock, Carry back the ark of God into the city; if I "shall find favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me "again, and shew me both it and his habitation: but if he thus "say, I have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do "to me as seemeth good to him;" *q. d.* Lord, the conspiracy against my life is strong, the danger great, the issue exceeding doubtful; but I commit all into thy hand; if David may yet be used in any farther service for his God, I shall see this city and thy lovely temple again; but if not, I ly at thy foot, to be disposed either for life or death, for the earthly or the heavenly Jerusalem, as seemeth best in thine eyes. This submission to Divine pleasure is included in the committing act of faith. Christian, what sayest thou to it? Is thy will content to go back, that the will of God may come on, and take place of it? It may be thou canst refer a difficult case to God, provided he will determine and issue it according to thy desires; but, in truth, that is no submission or resignation at all, but a sinful limiting of, and prescribing to God. It was an excellent reply that a choice Christian once made to another, when a beloved and only child lay in a dangerous sickness at the point of death, a friend asked the mother, What would you now desire of God in reference to your child? would you beg of him its life or its death, in this extremity that it is now in? The mother answered, I refer that to the will of God. But, said her friend, if God would refer it to you, what would you chuse then? Why truly, said she, if God would refer it to me, I would even refer it to God again. This is the true committing of ourselves and our troublesome concerns to the Lord.

4. The committing act of faith implies our renouncing and disclaiming all confidence and trust in the arm of flesh, and an expectation of relief from God only. If we commit ourselves to God, we must cease from man, Isa. ii. 22. To trust God in part, and the creature in part, is to set one foot upon a rock, and the other upon a quicksand. Those acts of faith that

give the entire glory to God, give real relief and comfort to us.

2. Let us see what grounds and encouragements the people of God have to commit themselves and all the matters of their fears to God, and so to enjoy the peace and comfort of a resigned will; and there are two sorts of encouragements before you, let the case be as difficult and frightful as it will, you may find sufficient encouragements in God, and somewhat from yourselves, *viz.* your relation to him, and experiences of him.

1. In God there is all that your hearts can desire to encourage you to trust him over all, and commit all into his hands. For,

1. He is able to help and relieve you; let the case be never so bad, yet "let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is "plenteous redemption," Psal. cxxx. 7, 8. Plenteous redemption, *i. e.* all the stores of power, choice of methods, plenty of means, abundance of ways to save his people, when they can see no way out of their troubles: therefore hope, Israel, in Jehovah.

2. As his power is almighty, so his wisdom is infinite and unsearchable; "He is a God of judgment, blessed are all they "that wait for him," Isa. xxx. 18. When the apostle Peter had related the wonderful preservation of Noah in the deluge, and of Lot in Sodom, one in a general destruction of the world by water, and the other in the overthrow of those cites by fire; he concludes, and so should we, "The Lord knoweth how to "deliver the godly out of temptation," 2 Pet. ii. 9. Some men have much power, but little wisdom to manage it, others are wise and prudent, but want ability; in God there is an infinite fulness of both.

3. His love to, and tenderness over his people, is transcendent and unparalleled: and this sets his wisdom and power both at work for their good; hence it is, that his eyes of providence run continually throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose hearts are perfect, *i. e.* upright towards him, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. Thus you see how he is every way fitted as a proper object of your trust.

2. Consider with yourselves, and you shall find encouragements to commit all to God. For,

1. You are his children, and to whom should children commit themselves in dangers and fears, but to their own father? *Doubtless thou art our Father*, saith the distressed church, Isa. lxiii. 15, 16. yea, Christian, *Thy Maker is thy husband*, Isa. liv. 5. Is not that a sufficient ground to cast thyself upon him?

What! a child not trust its own father? a wife not commit herself to her own husband?

2. You have trusted him with a far greater concern already than your estates, liberties, or lives; you have committed your souls to him, and your eternal interests, 2 Tim. i. 12. Shall we commit the jewel, and dispute the cabinet; trust him for heaven, and doubt him for earth?

3. You have ever found him faithful in all that you trusted him with, all your experiences are so many good grounds of confidence, Psal. ix. 10. Well then, resolve to trust God over all, and quietly leave the disposal of every thing to him: he hath been with you in all former straits, wants, and fears, hitherto he hath helped you, and cannot he do so again, except you tell him how? Oh! trust in his wisdom, power and love, and lean not to your own understandings. The fruit of resignation will be peace.

Rule 5. *If ever you will get rid of your fears and distractions, get your affections mortified to the world, and to the inordinate and immoderate love of every enjoyment in the world.*

The more you are mortified, the less you will be terrified; it is not the dead, but the living world, that puts our hearts into such fears and tremblings; if our hearts were once crucified, they would soon be quieted. It is the strength of our affections that puts so much strength into our afflictions. It was not therefore without great reason that the apostle compares the life of a Christian to the life of a soldier, who, if he mean to follow the camp, and acquit himself bravely in fight, must not entangle himself with the affairs of this life, 2 Tim. ii. 4. Sure there is no following Christ's camp, but with a disintangled heart from the world; for, proportionable to the heat of our love, will be the strength and height of our fears about these things; more particularly, if ever you will rid yourselves of your uncomfortable and uncomely fears, use all God's means to mortify your affections to the exorbitant esteem and love of,

1. Your estates. 2. Your liberty. 3. Your lives.

1. Get mortified and cooled hearts to your possessions and estates in the world. The poorest age afforded the richest Christians and noblest martyrs. Ships deepest laden are not best for encounters. The believing Hebrews *took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and enduring substance*, Heb. x. 34. They carried it rather like unconcerned spectators, than the true proprietors; they rejoiced when rude soldiers carried out their goods, as if

ſo many friends had been bringing them in. And whence was this, but from an heart fixed upon heaven, and mortified to things upon earth? Doubtleſs, they eſteemed and valued their eſtates, as the good providences of God for their more comfortable accommodation in this world; but it ſeems they did, and oh that we could look upon them as mercies of the loweſt and meaneſt rank and nature. The ſubſtance laid up in heaven was a better ſubſtance, and as long as that was ſafe, the loſs of this did not afflict them.

They could bleſs God for theſe things which for a little time did miniſter refreſhment to them, but they knew them to be tranſitory enjoyments, things that would make to themſelves wings and flee away, if their enemies had not touched them; but the ſubſtance laid up for them in heaven, that was an enduring ſubſtance. So far as thoſe earthly things might further them towards heavenly things, ſo far they prized and valued them, but if Satan would turn them into ſnares and temptations to deprive them of their better ſubſtance in heaven, they cou'd eaſily ſlight them, and take the ſpoiling of them joyfully. In a ſtreſs of weather, when the ſhip is ready to ſink and founder in a ſtorm, all hands are readily employed to throw the richeſt goods overboard; no man ſaith it is pity to caſt them away, but reaſon dictates to a man in that caſe, Better theſe periſh, than I periſh with and for them. Theſe be the wares that ſome will not caſt overboard, and therefore they are ſaid to drown men in perdition, 1 Tim. vi. 9. Demas would *rather periſh, than part with theſe things*, 2 Tim. iv. 10. But, reader, conſider ſeriouſly what comforts they can yield thee, when thou muſt look upon them as the price for which thou haſt ſold heaven, and all the hopes of glory; even as much as the price of blood yielded Judas; and ſo they will enſnare thee, if thy unmortified heart be over-heated with the love of them as his was.

2. Be mortified to your liberty, and take heed of placing too great an eſteem upon it, or neceſſity in it. Liberty is a deſirable thing to the very birds in the air; accommodate them the beſt you can in your cages, feed them with the richeſt fare, they had rather be cold and hungry with their liberty in the woods, than fat and warm in your houſes. But yet, as ſweet as it is, there may be more comfort and ſweetneſs in parting with it, than in keeping it, as the caſe may ſtand. The doors of a priſon may lock you in, but they cannot lock the Comforter out. Paul and Silas loſt their liberty for Chriſt, but not their comfort with it; they never were ſo truly at liberty, as

when their feet were made fast in the stocks, they never fared so deliciously as when they fed upon prisoners fare. God spread a table for them in the prison, sent them in a rich feast, yea, and they had music at their feast too, and that at midnight, Acts xvi. 25.

Patmos was a barren island, and a place designed for banished persons; it lay in the Egean sea, not far from the coast of the Lesser-Asia*: it was inhabited by none, because of the exceeding barrenness of it, but such who were appointed to it for their punishment; so that here John could meet with no more earthly refreshment than what the barren rocks, or wild and desperate persons condemned to live upon it, could afford. Ay, but there, there it was that Christ appeared to him in unexpressible glory; there it was that he had those ravishing visions, and saw the whole scheme of Providence in the government of this world; there he saw the New Jerusalem coming down from God out of heaven, as a bride prepared for her husband. This made a Patmos become a Paradise; never did any place afford him such comfort as this did. So that Christians may not think there is so strict and necessary a connexion betwixt liberty and comfort, that he that takes away the first, must needs deprive them of the other.

Again, Suppose we should be so fond of our liberty as to exchange truth and a good conscience for it; cannot God so imbitter it to you, yea, hath he not so imbittered it to many, that they were quickly weary of it, and glad of an opportunity to change it for a prison. Our own Martyrology furnishes us with many sad examples of it. Oh, what will you do with your bitter, dear-bought liberty, when your peace is taken away from the inward man? when God shall clap up your souls in prison, and put your consciences into his bonds and fetters, then will you say as the martyr did, 'I am in prison till I be 'in prison.'

3. Be mortified to the inordinate and fond love of life, as ever you expect relief against the fears of death. Reason thyself into a lower value of thy life. Methinks you have arguments enough to cure your fondness in this point. Have you found it such a pleasant life to you, for so much of it as is past? You know how the apostle represents it, 2 Cor. v. 4. "We "that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burthened." And is a burthened and a groaning life so desirable? You know also, as he speaks in the next verse, that "whilst you are at home

* Rev. i. 9, 10.

" in the body, you are absent from the Lord." And is a state of absence from Jesus Christ so desirable to a soul that loves him? Can you find much pleasure so far from home? You may fancy what you will, but, upon serious recollection, you will never be out of the reach of Satan's temptations, never freed from your own indwelling corruptions, these conflicts cannot have an end till life be ended. You also stand convinced, that till you be dead, your souls cannot be satisfied, nor your desires be at rest, have what comforts soever from God in the way of faith and course of duties, your hearts are still off the center, and will still gravitate and gasp heavenward. You also know that die you must, and the time of your departure is at hand; and of all deaths, if you might have your choice, none is more honourable to God, or like to be so evidential and comfortable to you, as a violent death for Christ; therein you come to him by consent and choice, not by necessity and constraint; therein you give a public testimony for Christ, which is the highest use that ever our blood can be put to, or honoured by; and for the pain and and torment, as the martyr said, *He that takes away from my torment, takes away from my reward.* But even in that point God can make it easier to you than a natural death would be; he will be with you in your extremity, and administer such reviving cordials as other men must not look to taste, at least not ordinarily, they being prepared and reserved for such, against such an hour.

Oh then, work out the inordinate love of life, by working in such mortifying considerations upon your own hearts; and if once you gain but this point, you will quickly find all your pains and prayers richly answered in the ease and rest of your hearts, in the most scaring and frightful times.

Rule 6. *Eye the encouraging examples of those that have trod the path of sufferings before you, and strive to imitate such worthy patterns.*

Behold the cloud of witnesses encompassing you round about; a cloud like that over the Israelites to direct you; yea, a cloud for multitude of excellent persons to animate and encourage you, Heb. xii. 1. " Oh take them for an ensample in suffering, " affliction and patience," James v. 10. Examples of excellent persons that have broken the ice, and beaten the path before us, are of excellent use to suppress our fears, and rouze our courage in our own encounters.

The first sufferers had the hardest task; they that first entered the lists for Christ, wanted those helps to suppress fear which they have left unto us. Strange and untired torments are most

terrible, *for magnitudinem rerum consuetudo subducit*, trial and acquaintance abates the formidable greatness of evils; they knew not the strength of that enemy they were to engage, but we fight with an enemy that hath been often beaten and triumphed over by our brethren that went before us. Certainly we that live in the last times have the best helps that ever any had to subdue their fears; we have heard of the courage and constancy of our brethren, in as sharp trials of their courage as ever we can be called to; we have read with what Christian gallantry they have triumphed over all sorts of sufferings and torments, how they have been strengthened with all might in the inner man unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness, Col. i. 11. how they have gone away from the courts that censured and punished them, rejoicing that they were honoured to be dishonoured for Christ, as the strict reading of that text is, Acts v. 41.* counting the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, Heb. xi. 26. which at that time was the magazine of the world for riches: You read what "trials they "have had of cruel mockings, yea, moreover of bonds and "imprisonments; how they were stoned, sawn asunder, tempted, "slain with the sword, wandered about in sheeps skins, and "goat skins, destitute, afflicted, tormented," Heb. xi. 36, 37. In all which they obtained a good report; they came out of the field with triumphant faith and patience; and this was not the effect of an over-heated zeal at the first outset, but the same spirit of courage was found among Christians in after-ages, who have put off their persecutors with a kind of pleasant scorn and contempt of torments.

So did Basil, truly surnamed the Great, when Valens the emperor in a great rage threatened him with banishment, and tortures, as to the first, said he, † I little regard it: for the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; and as for tortures, what can they do upon such a poor thin body as mine, nothing but skin and bone? And at another time ‡, when Eusebius governor of Pontus told him in a great rage, he would tear his very liver out of his bowels: Truly, said Basil, you will do me a very good turn in it, to take out my naughty liver; which inflames and diseaseth my whole body. Their enemies have professed, the Christians put them to shame, by smiling

* Ὅτι κατηξιώθησαν ἀτιμασθῆναι.
† Socrates, hist. l. 4. c. 26.
‡ Theod. lib. 4. cap. 19.

at their cruelties and threatnings. Ignatius's love to Christ had so perfectly overcome all fears of sufferings, that when he was going to be thrown for a prey among the lions and leopards, he professed he longed to be among them, and, said he, if they will not dispatch me the sooner, I will provoke them, that I may be with my sweet Jesus. And if we come down to later ages, we shall find as stout champions for Christ. The courage and undauntedness of Luther is trumpeted abroad throughout the Christian world, it would swell this small tract too much, but to note the most eminent instances of his courage for Christ: the last he gave was by his sorrow in his last sickness, that he must carry his blood to the grave. The like heroic spirit appeared in divers persons of honour and eminence, who zealously espoused the same cause of reformation with him. Remarkable to this purpose is that famous epistle witten by Ulricus ab Hutten, a German knight, in defence of Luther's cause against the cardinals and bishops assembled at Worms. 'I will 'go through (said he) with what I have undertaken against 'you, and will stir up men to seek their freedom: such as 'yield not to me at first, I will overcome with importunity; 'I neither care nor fear what may befal me, being prepared for 'either event; either to ruin you, to the great benefit of my 'country, or myself to fall with a good conscience; therefore 'that you may see with what confidence I contemn your 'threats, I do profess myself to be your irreconcilable enemy, 'whilst ye persecute Luther and such as he is. No power of 'yours, no injury of fortune shall alter this mind in me; tho' 'you take away my life, yet this well deserving of mine to-'wards my country's liberty, shall not die. I know that my 'endeavour to remove such as you are, and to place worthy 'ministers in your room, is acceptable to God; and in the last 'judgment, I trust it will be safer for me to have offended you, 'than to have had your favour.'

It was also a brave heroic spirit by which John duke of Saxony was acted to defend the reformation, who despising all the favours and offers of the court, and of Rome, and the terrors of death itself; appeared, as my author speaks, in its behalf against all the devils, and the pope ‖, in three public imperial assemblies, saying openly to their faces, I must serve God, or the world: and which of these two do ye think is the better? And as soon as Luther's sermons were forbidden, he hasted away, saying, I will not stay there, where I cannot have my liberty to serve God.

‖ Spangenberg, ad an. 1531.

And now reader, thou hast a little taste of the courage and zeal of those worthies who are gone before thee in defence of that cause for which thou feareſt to suffer. Most men, saith Chrysostom, that read or hear such examples, are like the spectators of the Roman gladiators, who stood by and praised their courage, but durst not enter the lists to do what they did. If ever thou wilt get like courage for Christ, thus improve such famous examples.

1. Make use of them to obviate the prejudice of singularity; you see you have store of good company, the same things you are like to suffer for Christ, have been accomplished in the rest of your brethren in the world, 1 Pet. v. 9.

2. Improve them against the prejudice of all that shame that attends sufferings, here you may see the most excellent persons in the world reckoning it their glory to suffer the vilest things for Jesus Christ, Acts v. 31. Heb. xi. 26.

3. Improve them against the conceit of the insupportableness of sufferings. Lo here, poor weak creatures which have been carried honourably and comfortably through the cruelest and difficultest sufferings for Christ. Our women and children, not to speak of men, (saith Tertullian) overcome their tormentors, and the fire cannot fetch so much as a sigh from them.

4. Improve them against thine own unbelief, and staggerings at the faithfulness of God in that promise, Isa. xliii. 2. "When "thou passest through the fire, I will be with thee," *&c.* Lo here you have the recorded and faithful testimonies of such as have tried it, with one voice witnessing for God, *Thy word is truth, thy word is truth.*

5. Improve them against the sensible weakness of your own graces; are you afraid your faith, love, and patience are too weak to carry you through great trials? Why doubtless so were many of them too, they were men of like fears, troubled with a bad heart, and a busy devil as well as you, they also had their clouds and damps as you have; yet the almighty power of God supported them; and out of weakness they were made strong: despond not therefore, but get a judgment satisfied, Psal. xliv. 22. a conscience sprinkled, 2 Tim. i. 7. and a call cleared, Dan. vi. 10. Exercise faith also with respect to divine assistances, and everlasting rewards as they did: and doubt not but the same God that enabled them to finish their course with joy, will be as good to you as he was to them. Consider, Christ hath done as much for you as he did for any of them, and deserves as much from you as from any of them; and hath

prepared the same glory for you, that he prepared for them: O that such considerations might provoke you to shew as much courage and love to Christ, as any of them ever did.

Rule 7. *If ever you will get above the power of your own fears, in a suffering day make haste to clear your interest in Christ, and your pardon in his blood before that evil day come.*

The clearer this is, the bolder you will be; an assured Christian was never known to be a coward in sufferings: it is impossible to be clear of fears, till you are cleared of the doubts about interest in, and pardon by Christ. Nothing is found more strengthning to our fears, than that which clouds our evidences; and nothing more to quiet and cure our fears, than that which clears our evidences. The shedding abroad of God's love in our hearts, will quickly fill them with a spirit of glorying in tribulations, Rom. v. 5. When the believing Hebrews once came to know in themselves that they had an enduring substance in heaven, they quickly found in themselves an unconcerned heart for the loss of their comforts on earth, Heb. x. 34. and so should we too. For,

1. Assurance satisfies a man that his treasure and true happiness is secured to him, and laid out of the reach of all his enemies; and so long as that is safe he hath all the reason in the world to be quiet, and chearful, "I know (saith Paul) whom I have believed, and am perswaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day," 2 Tim. i. 12. And he gives this as his reason why he was not ashamed of Christ's sufferings.

2. The assured Christian knows that if death itself come, (which is the worst men can inflict) he shall be no loser by the exchange; nay he shall make the best bargain that ever he made since he first parted with all his afflictions, to follow Christ. There are two rich bargains a Christian makes; one is, when he exchanges the world for Christ in his first choice at his conversion, in point of love and estimation: the other is, when he actually parts with the world for Christ at his dissolution; both these are rich bargains, and upon this ground it was the apostle said, "To me to live is Christ and to die is gain," Phil. i. 21. The death of a believer in Christ, is gain unspeakable, but if a man would make the utmost gain by dying, he shall find it in dying for Christ, as well as in Christ: and to shew you wherein the gain of such a death lies, let a few particulars be weighed, wherein the gain will be cast up in both; he that is assured he dies in Christ, knows,

1. That his living time is his labouring time, but his dying

time is his harveſt time, whilſt we live we are plowing and ſowing in all the duties of religion, but when we die, then we reap the fruit and comfort of all our labours and duties, Gal. vi. 8, 9. As much therefore as the reaping time is better than the ſowing and plowing time, ſo much better is the death than the life of a believer.

2. A believer's living time is his fighting time, but his dying time is his conquering and triumphing time, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56. The conflict is ſharp, but the triumph is ſweet; and as much as victory and triumph are better than fighting, ſo much is death better than life to him that dieth in Jeſus.

3. A believer's living time is his tireſome and weary time, but his dying time is his reſting and ſleeping time. Iſai. lvii. 2. Here we ſpend and faint, there we reſt in our beds, and as much as refreſhing reſt in ſleep is better than tiring and fainting, ſo much is a believer's death better than his life.

4. A believer's living time is his waiting and longing time, but his time of dying is the time of enjoying what he hath long wiſhed and waited for, Phil. i. 23. here we groan and ſigh for Chriſt, there we behold and enjoy Chriſt, and ſo much as viſion and fruition are better and ſweeter than hoping and waiting for it; ſo much is a believer's death better than his life.

2. As the advantage a believer makes of death is great to him by dying only in Chriſt; ſo it is much greater, and the richeſt improvement that can be made of Death to die for Chriſt, as well as in Chriſt: for compare them in a few particulars and you you ſhall find,

1. That though a natural death hath leſs horror, yet a violent death for Chriſt hath more honour in it. To him that dies united with Chriſt, the grave is *a bed of reſt*; but to him that dies as a martyr for Chriſt, the grave is a bed of honour. "To "you (ſaith the apoſtle) it is given in the behalf of Chriſt, not "only to believe, but alſo to ſuffer for his ſake," Phil. i. 29. To you it is granted as a great honour and favour to ſuffer for Chriſt; all that live in Chriſt have not the honour to lay down their lives for Chriſt. It was the great trouble of Ludovicus Marſacus *, a knight of France, to be exempted becauſe of his dignity, from wearing his chain for Chriſt, as the other priſoners did; and he reſented it, as a great injury, "Give me (ſaith he "to his keeper) my chain as well as they, and create me a "knight of that noble order."

* *Cur me non quoque torque donas, et illuſtris illius ordinis militem non creas?*

2. By a natural death we only submit ourselves to the unavoidable consequence of sin, but in dying a violent death for Christ, we give our testimony against the evil of sin, and for the precious truths of Jesus Christ. The first is the payment of a debt of justice due by the fall of Adam; the second is the payment of a debt of thankfulness and obedience due to Christ, who redeemed us with his own blood. Thus we become witnesses for God, as well as sufferers upon the account of sin: in the first, sin witnesseth against us, in this we witness against it; and indeed it is a great testimony against the evil of sin: we declare to all the world that there is not so much evil in a dungeon, in a bloody ax, or consuming flames, as there is in sin: that it is far better to lose our carnal friends, estates, liberties, and lives, than part with Christ's truths and a good conscience, as * Zuinglius said, "What sort of death should not a Christian "chuse, what punishment should he not rather undergo; yea, "into what vault of hell should he not rather chuse to be cast, "than to witness against truth and conscience."

3. A natural death in Christ may be as safe to ourselves, but a violent death for Christ, will be more beneficial to others; by the former we shall come to heaven ourselves, but by the latter we may bring many souls thither. The blood of the martyrs is truly called the seed of the church. Many waxed confident by Paul's bonds, his sufferings fell out to the furtherance of the gospel, and so may ours: in this case a Christian, like Sampson, doth greater service against Satan and his cause, by his death, than by his life.

If we only die a natural death in our beds, we die in possession of the truths of Christ ourselves: but if we die martyrs for Christ, we secure that precious inheritance to the generations to come, and those that are yet unborn shall bless God, not only for his truths, but for our courage, zeal, and constancy, by which it was preserved for them, and transmitted to them.

By all this you see that death to a believer is great gain, it is great gain if he only die in Christ, it is all that, and a great deal more added, if he also die for Christ: and he that is assured of such advantages by death either way, must needs feel his fears of death shrink away before such assurances; yea, he will rather have life in patience, and death in desire; he will not only submit quietly, but rejoice exceedingly to be used by God

* *Quas non oportet mortes præeligere, quod non supplicium potius ferre, imo in quam profundam inferni abyssum non intrare, quam contra conscientiam attestari?*

in such honourable enjoyment *. Assurance will call a bloody death a safe passage to Canaan through the red sea. It will call Satan that instigates these his instruments, and all that are employed in such bloody work by him, so many Balaams brought to curse, but they do indeed bless the people of God, and not curse them. The assured Christian looks upon his death as his wedding-day, Rev. xix. 7. And therefore it doth not much differ, whether the horse sent to fetch him to Christ be pale or red, so he may be with Christ, his love, as Ignatius called him.

He looks upon death as his day of enlargement out of prison, 2 Cor v. 8. and it is not much odds what hand opens the door, or whether a friend or enemy close his eyes, so he have his liberty, and may be with Christ.

O then give the Lord no rest, till your hearts be at rest by the assurance of his love, and the pardon of your sins; when you can boldly say, the Lord *is your help*, you will quickly say what immediately follows, *I will not fear what man can do unto me*, Heb. xiii. 6. And why, if thy heart be upright, mayst thou not attain it? Full assurance is possible, else it had not been put into the command, 2 Pet. i. 10. The sealing graces are in you, the sealing Spirit is ready to do it for you, the sealing promises belong to you; but we give not all diligence, and therefore go without the comfort of it. Would we pray more, and strive more, would we keep our hearts with a stricter watch; mortify sin more thoroughly, and walk before God more accurately; how soon may we attain this blessed assurance, and in it an excellent cure for our distracting and slavish fears.

Rule 8. *Let him that designs to free himself of distracting fears, be careful to maintain the purity of his conscience, and integrity of his ways, in the whole course of his conversation in this world.*

Uprightness will give us boldness, and purity will yield us peace. Isa. xxxii. 17. "The work of righteousness shall be "peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assu-"rance for ever." Look as fear follows guilt and guile, so peace and quietness follow righteousness and sincerity, Prov. xxviii. 1. *The wicked flee when no man pursueth, but the righteous are bold as a lion.* His confidence is great, because his conscience is quiet, the peace of God guards his heart and mind. There are three remarkable steps by which Christians rise to the height of courage in tribulations, Rom. v. 1, 2, 3, 4. First they are justified and acquitted from guilt by faith, ver. 1. Then they

* They are rather delights to us than torments. *Basil.*

are brought into a ſtate of favour and acceptation with God, ver. 2. Thence they riſe one ſtep higher, even to a view of heaven, and the glory to come, ver. 3. and from thence they take an eaſy ſtep to glorying in tribulations, ver. 4.

I ſay, it is an eaſy ſtep; for let a man once obtain the pardon of ſin, the favour of God, and a believing view and proſpect of the glory to come; and it is ſo eaſy to triumph in tribulation, in ſuch a ſtation as that is, that it will be found as hard to hinder it, as to hinder a man from laughing when he is tickled.

Chriſtians have always found it a ſpring of courage and comfort, 2 Cor. i. 12. "For our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of "our conſcience, that in ſimplicity, and godly ſincerity, not "with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had "our converſation in the world." Their hearts did not reproach them with by-ends in religion; their conſciences witneſſed that they made not religion a cloak to cover any fleſhly deſign, but were ſincere in what they profeſſed; and this enabled them to rejoice in the midſt of ſufferings. An earthen veſſel ſet empty on the fire will crack and fly in pieces, and ſo will an hypocritical, formal, and mere nominal Chriſtian; but he that hath ſuch ſubſtantial and real principles of courage as theſe within him, will endure the trial, and be never the worſe for the fire.

The very Heathens diſcovered the advantage of moral integrity, and the peace it yielded to their natural conſciences in times of trouble.

Nil conſcire tibi, nulla palleſcere culpa.
Hic murus aheneus eſto.—*

It was to them as a wall of braſs. Much more will godly ſimplicity, and the ſprinkling of the blood of Chriſt upon our conſciences, ſecure and encourage our hearts. This atheiſtical age laughs conſcience and purity to ſcorn; but let them laugh, this is it which will make thee laugh when they ſhall cry. Paul exerciſed himſelf, or made it his buſineſs, "To have always a con-"ſcience void of offence, both towards God, and towards man," Acts xxiv. 16. †. And it was richly worth his labour, it re-

* *Nil conſcire, &c.* Engliſhed thus,
Be this thy brazen bulwark of defence,
Still to preſerve thy conſcious innocence,
Nor e'er turn pale with guilt.--

† Ἀσκῶ *meditor, operam do,*

paid him ten thousand-fold in the peace, courage, and comfort it gave him in all the troubles of his life, which were great and many.

Conscience must be the bearing shoulder on which the burden must ly, beware therefore it be not galled with guilt, or put out of joint by any fall into sin, it is sad bearing on such a shoulder; instead of bearing your burdens, you will not be able to bear its pain and anguish. To prevent this carefully observe these rules.

1. Over-awe your hearts every day, and in every place with the eye of God. This walking as before God will keep you upright, Gen xvii. 1. If you so speak and live as those that know God sees you, such will be your uprightness, that you will not care if all the world see you too. An artist came to Drusius, and offered to build him an house, so contrived, that he might do what he would within doors, and no man see him: Nay said Drusius, *so build it that every one may see.*

2. Do no action, undertake no design, that you dare not preface with prayer; this is your rule, Phil. iv. 6. Touch not that you dare not pray for a blessing upon; if you dare not pray, dare not to engage; if you cannot send your prayers before, be confident, shame and guilt will follow after.

3. Be more afraid of grieving God, or wounding conscience, than of displeasing or losing all the friends you have in the world besides; look upon every adventure upon sin to escape danger to be the same thing as if you should sink the ship to avoid one that you take to be a pirate; or as the fatal mistake of two vials, wherein there is poison and physic.

4. What counsel you would give another, that give yourselves when the case shall be your own; your judgment is most clear, when interest is least felt. David's judgment was very upright, when he judged himself in a remote parable.

5. Be willing to bear the faithful reproofs of your faults from men, as the reproving voice of God; for they are no less when duly administred. This will be a good help to keep you upright, Psal. cxxxv. 23, 24. "Let the righteous smite me," &c. It is said of Sir Anthony Cope, that he shamed none so much as himself in his family-prayers, and desired the ministers of his acquaintance not to favour his faults; but tell me, said he, and spare not.

6. Be mindful daily of your dying-day, and your great audit-day, and do all with respect to them. Thus keep your integrity and peace, and that will keep out your fears and terrors.

Rule 9. *Carefully record the experience of God's care over you, and faithfulness to you in all your past dangers and distresses, and apply them to the cure of your present fears and despondencies.*

Recorded experiences are excellent remedies, Exod. xvii. 14. "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears "of Joshua." There were two things in that record; the victory obtained over Amalek, and the way of obtaining it by incessant prayer: and there are two things to be done to secure this mercy for their use and benefit in future fears, it must be recorded and rehearsed, preserved from oblivion, and seasonably produced for relief.

There are two special assistances given us against fear by experience.

1. It abates the terror of sufferings.
2. It assists faith in the promises.

1. Experience greatly abates the terror of sufferings, and makes them less formidable and scaring than otherwise they would be. Fear faith, they are deep waters, and will drown us; experience faith, they are much shallower than we think, and are safely fordable; others have, and we may pass through the Red-sea, and not be overwhelmed. Fear faith, the pains of death are unconceivable, sharp and bitter, the living little know what the dying feel; and to lye in a stinking prison in continual expectation of a cruel death, is an unsupportable evil: Experience contradicts all these false reports which make our hearts faint, as the second spies did the daunting stories of the first; and assures us prisons and death are not, when we come home to them for Christ, what they seem and appear to be at a distance. O what a good report have those faithful men given, who have searched and tried these things! who have gone down themselves into the valley of the shadow of death, and seen what there is in a prison, and in death itself, so long as they were in sight and hearing, able by words or signs to contradict our false notions of it. Oh what a sweet account did Pomponius Algerius give of his stinking prison at Lyons in France! dating all his letters whilst he was there, *From the detestable orchard of the* Leonine *prison;* and when carried to Venice, in a letter from the prison there, he writes thus to his Christian friend; *I shall utter that which scarce any will believe, I have found a nest of honey in the entrails of a lion, a paradise of pleasure in a deep dark dungeon, in a place of sorrow and death, tranquillity of hope and life.* Oh! here it is that the Spirit of God and of glory rests upon us.

So blessed Mr. Philpot, our own martyr, in one of his sweet

encouraging letters: 'O how my heart leaps (saith he) that I 'am so near to eternal bliss! God forgive me my unthankfulness 'and unworthiness of so great glory. I have so much joy of the 'reward prepared for me, the most wretched sinner, that though 'I be in the place of darkness and mourning, yet I cannot lament, 'but am night and day so joyful as though I were under no cross 'at all; in all the days of my life I was never so joyful, the 'name of the Lord be praised.'

Others have given the signals agreed upon betwixt them and their friends in the midst of the flames, thereby, to the last, confirming this truth, that God makes the inside of sufferings quite another thing to what the appearance and outside of them is to sense. Thus the experience of others abates the terrors of sufferings to you; and all this is fully confirmed by the personal experience you yourselves have had of the supports and comforts of God, wherein soever you have conscientiously suffered for his sake.

2. And this cannot but be a singular assistance to your faith; your own and others experiences, just like Aaron and Hur, stay up the hands of faith on the one side and the other, that they hang not down, whilst your fears, like those Amalekites, fall before you. For what is experience, but the bringing down of the divine promises to the test of sense and feeling? It is our duty to believe the promises without trial and experiments, but it is easier to do it after so many trials; so that your own and others experiences, carefully recorded and seasonably applied, would be food to your faith, and a cure to many of your fears in a suffering day.

Rule 10. *You can never free yourself from sinful fears, 'till you throughly believe and consider Christ's providential kingdom over all the creatures and affairs in this lower world.*

Poor timorous souls! is there not a King, a supreme Lord under whom devils and men are? hath not Christ the reins of government in his hands? Mat. xxviii. 18. Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11, 12. John xvii. 2. Were this dominion of Christ, and dependence of all creatures on him, well studied and believed, it would cut off both our trust in men, and our fear of men; we should soon discern they have no power either to help us or to hurt us, but what they receive from above. Our enemies are apt to over-rate their own power, in their pride, and we are as apt to over-rate it too in our fears. *Knowest thou not* (saith Pilate to Christ) *that I have power to crucify thee, and I have power to release thee?* q. d. Refusest thou to answer me? dost thou not know who

and what I am? Yes, yes, saith Christ, I know thee well enough to be a poor impotent creature, who hast no power at all but what is given thee from above; I know thee, and therefore do not fear thee. But we are apt to take their own boasts for truth, and believe their power to be such as they vainly vogue it to be; whereas in truth all our enemies are sustained by Christ, Col. i. 17. they are bounded and limited by Christ, Rev. ii. 10. Providence hath its influences upon their hearts and wills immediately, Jer. xv. 11. Psal. cvi. 46. So that they cannot do whatever they would do, but their wills as well as their hands are ordered by God. Jacob was in Laban's and in Esau's hands; both hated him, but neither could hurt him. David was in Saul's hand, who hunted for him as a prey, yet is forced to dismiss him quietly, blessing instead of slaying him. Melancthon and Pomeron both fell into the hands of Charles V. than whom Christendom had not a more prudent prince, nor the church of Christ a fiercer enemy; yet he treats these great and active reformers gently, dismisseth them freely, not once forbidding them to preach or print the doctrine which he so much opposed and hated.

Oh Christian! if ever thou wilt get above thy fears, settle these things upon thy heart by faith.

1. That the reins of government are in Christ's hands; enemies, like wild horses, may prance and tramp up and down the world, as though they would tread down all that are in their way; but the bridle of providence is in their mouths, and upon their proud necks, 2 Kings xix. 28. and that bridle hath a strong curb.

2. The care of the saints properly pertains to Christ; he is the head of the body, Eph. i. 22, 23. our consulting head; and it were a reproach and dishonour to Christ, to fill our heads with distracting cares and fears, when we have so wise an head to consult and contrive for us.

3. You have lived all your days upon the care of Christ hitherto; no truth is more manifest than this, that there hath been a wisdom beyond your own, that hath guided your ways, Jer. x. 23. a power above your own, that hath supported your burdens, Psal. lxxiii. 26. a spring of relief out of yourselves that hath supplied all your wants, Luke xxii. 35. He hath performed all things for you.

4. Jesus Christ hath secured his people by many promises to take care of them, how dangerous soever the times shall be, Eccles. viii. 12. Psal. lxxvi. 10. Amos ix. 8, 9. Rom. viii. 28. Oh! if these things were throughly believed and well improved,

fears could no more distract or afflict our hearts, than storms or clouds could trouble the upper region: but we forget his providences and promises, and are so justly left in the hands of our own fears to be afflicted for it.

Rule 11. *Subject your carnal reasonings to faith, and keep your thoughts more under the government of faith, if ever you expect a composed and quiet heart in distracting evil times.*

He that layeth aside the rules of faith, and measures all things by the rule of his own shallow reason, will be his own bugbear; if reason may be permitted to judge all things, and to make its own inferences and conclusions from the aspects and appearances of second causes, your hearts shall have no rest day nor night; this alone will keep you in continual alarms.

And yet how apt are the best men to measure things by this rule, and to judge of all God's designs and mysterious providences by it! In other things it is the judge and arbiter, and therefore we would make it so here too; and what it concludes and dictates we are prone to believe, because its dictates are backed and befriended by sense, whence it gathers its intelligence and information. *O quam sapiens argumentatrix sibi videtur ratio humana?* How wise and strong do its arguments and conclusions seem to us! saith Luther. This carnal reason is the thing that puts us into such confusions of mind and thoughts. It is this that,

1. Quarrels with the promises, shakes their credit, and our confidence in them, Exod. v. 22, 23.

2. It is this that boldly limits the divine power, and assigns it boundaries of its own fixing, Psal. lxxviii. 20, 41.

3. It is carnal reason that draws desperate conclusions from providential appearances and aspects, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. and prognosticates our ruin from them.

4. It is this carnal reason that puts us upon sinful shifts and indirect courses to deliver and save ourselves from danger, which do but the more perplex and entangle us, Isa. xxx. 15, 16.

5. It is mostly from our arrogant reasonings that our thoughts are discomposed and divided; from this fountain it is that they flow into our hearts in multitudes when dangers are near, Psal. xciv. 16. Psal. xlii. 1.

All these mischiefs owe themselves to the exorbitant actings and intrusions of our carnal reasons; but these things ought not to be so, this is beside rule. For,

1. Though there be nothing in the matters of faith or providence contrary to right reason, yet there are many things in

both, quite above the reach, and beyond the ken of reason, Isa. lv. 8. And,

2. The confident dictates of reason are frequently confuted by experience all the world over; it is every day made a liar, and the frights it puts us into, proved to be vain and groundless, Isa. li. 13.

Nothing can be better for us, than to resign up our reason to faith, to see all things through the promises, and trust God over all events.

Rule 12. *To conclude, exalt the fear of God in your hearts, and let it gain the ascendant over all your other fears.*

This is the prescription in my text for the cure of all our slavish fears, and indeed all the formentioned rules for the cure of sinful fears run into this, and are reducible to it. For,

1. Doth the knowledge and application of the covenant of grace cure our fears? The fear of God is both a part of that covenant, and an evidence of our interest in it, Jer. xxxii. 40.

2. Doth sinful fear plunge men into such distresses of conscience? Why, the fear of God will preserve your ways clean and pure, Psal. xix. 9. and so those mischiefs will be prevented.

3. Doth foresight and provision for evil days prevent distracting fears when they come? Nothing like the fear of God enables us to such a prevision and provision for them, Heb. xi. 7.

4. Do we relieve ourselves against fear by committing all to God? Surely it is the fear of God that drives us to him as our only *asylum* and sure refuge, Mal. iii. 16. *They feared God, and thought upon his name,* (*i. e.*) they meditated on his name, which was their refuge, his attributes their chambers of rest.

5. Must our affections to the world be mortified before our fears can be subdued? This is the instrument of mortification, Neh. v. 15.

6. Do the worthy examples of those that are gone before us, tend to the cure of our cowardice and fears? Why the fear of God will provoke in you an holy self-jealousy, lest you fail of the grace they manifested, and come short of those excellent patterns, Heb. xii. 15.

7. Is the assurance of interest in God, and the pardon of sin such an excellent antidote against slavish fear? Why, he that walks in the fear of God, shall walk in the comforts of the Holy Ghost also, Acts ix. 31.

8. Is integrity of heart and way such a fountain of courage in evil times? Know, reader, no grace promotes this integrity

and uprightneſs more than the fear of God doth, Prov. xvi. 6. Prov. xxiii. 17.

9. Do the reviving of paſt experiences ſuppreſs ſinful fears? No doubt this was the ſubject which the fear of God put them upon, for mutual encouragement, Mal. iii. 16.

10. Are the providences of God in this world ſuch cordials againſt fear? The fear of God is the very character and mark of thoſe perſons over whom his providence ſhall watch in the difficulteſt times, Eccleſ. viii. 12.

11. Doth our truſting in our own reaſon, and making it our rule and meaſure, breed ſo many fears? Why, the fear of God will take men off from ſuch ſelf confidence, and bring them to truſt the faithful God with all doubtful iſſues, and events, as the very ſcope of my text fully manifeſts. Fear not their fear: their fear, moving by the direction of carnal reaſon, drove them not to God, but to the Aſſyrian for help. Follow not you their example in this. But how ſhall they help it? Why, *ſanctify the Lord of Hoſts, and make him your fear.*

CHAP. VII.

Anſwering the moſt material pleas for ſlaviſh fears, and diſſolving the common objections againſt courage and conſtancy of mind in times of danger.

THE pleas and excuſes for our cowardly faintneſs in the day of trouble are endleſs, and ſo would his taſk be that ſhould undertake particularly to anſwer them all. It is but the cutting off an *Hydra*'s head, when one is gone, ten more ſtart up; what is moſt material I will here take into conſideration. When good men (for with ſuch I am dealing in this chapter) ſee a formidable face and appearance of ſharp and bloody times approaching them, they begin to tremble, their hearts faint, and their hands hang down with unbecoming deſpondency, and puſilanimity; their thoughts are ſo diſtracted, their reaſon and faith ſo clouded by their fears, that their temptations are thereby exceedingly ſtrengthened upon them, and their principles and profeſſions brought under the deriſion and contempt of their enemies; and if their brethren, to whom God hath given more courage and conſtancy, and who diſcern the miſchief like to enſue from their uncomely carriage, admoniſh

and advise them of it: they have abundance of pleas and defences for their fears, yea, when they reason the point of suffering in their own thoughts, and the matter is debated (as in such times it is common) betwixt faith and fear, O what endless work do their fears put upon their faith, to solve all the *buts* and *ifs* which their fears will object or suppose.

Some of the principal of them I think it worth while here to consider, and endeavour to satisfy, that, if possible, I may prevail with all gracious persons to be more magnanimous. And first of all,

Plea 1. Sufferings for Christ are strange things to the Christians of this age, we have had the happy lot to fall into milder times than the primitive Christians did, or those that struggled in our own land in the beginning of reformation; and therefore we may be excused for our fears, by reason of our own unacquaintedness with sufferings in our times.

Answer 1. One fault is but a bad excuse for another, why are sufferings such strangers to you? Why did you not cast upon them in the days of peace, and reckon that such days must come? Did you not covenant with Christ to follow him whithersoever he should go, to take up your cross, and follow him? And did not the word plainly tell you, that "All that will live godly in "Christ Jesus, must suffer persecution," 2 Tim. iii. 12. "And "that we must through much tribulation enter into the king-"dom of God," Acts xiv. 22. Did we fall asleep in quiet and prosperous days, and dream of halcyon days all our time on earth? That the mountain of our prosperity stood strong, and we should never be moved? That we should die in our nest, and multiply our days as the sand; Babylon's children indeed dream so, Rev. xviii. 7. but the children of Sion should be better instructed. Alas! how soon may the brightest day be overcast? The weather is not so variable, as the state of the church in this world is; now a calm, Acts ix. 31. and then a storm, Acts xii. 1, 2. You could not but know what contingent and variable things all things on earth are; why then did you delude yourselves with such fond dreams? But as a learned man * rightly observes, *Mundus senescens patitur phantasias.* The older the world grows, the more drowzy and doting it still grows, and these are the days in which the wise as well as the foolish virgins slumber. Sure it is but a bad plea, after so many warnings from the word, and from the rod to say, I did not think of such times, I dreamed not of them.

* Gerson.

2. Or if you say, though you have conversed with death and sufferings by speculation, yet you lived not in such times wherein you might see (as other sufferers did) the encouraging faith, patience and zeal of others set before your eyes in a lively pattern and example. Sufferings were not only familiarized to them by frequency, but facilitated also by the daily examples of those that went before them.

But think you indeed that nothing but encouragement and advantage to followers, arose from the trials of those that went before? Alas, there were sometimes the greatest damps and discouragements imaginable; the zeal of those that followed have often been inflamed by the faintings of those that were tried before them. In the seventh persecution under Decius, anno 250, there were standing before the tribunal, certain of the warriors or knights, *viz.* Ammon, Zenon, Ptolemeus, Ingennus, and a certain aged man called Theophilus, who all standing by as spectators when a certain Christian was examined, and there seeing him for fear, ready to decline, and fall away, did almost burst for sorrow within themselves: they made signs to him with their hands, and all gestures of the body to be constant; this being noted by all the standers by, they were ready to lay hold upon them; but they preventing the matter, pressed up of their own accord, before the bench of the judge, professing themselves to be Christians, insomuch that both the president and the benchers were all astonished, and the Christians which were judged, the more encouraged. Such damping spectacles the Christians of former ages had frequently set before them.

And it was no small trial to some of them, to hear the faintings and abnegation of those that went before them, pleaded against their constancy; as in the time of Valens, it was urged by the persecutors; those that came to their trial before you, have acknowleged their errors, begged our pardon, and returned to us: and why will you stand it out so obstinately? But the Christians answered, *Nos hac potissimum ratione viriliter stabimus, For this very reason we will stand to it the more manfully, to repair their scandal, by our greater courage for Christ.* These were the helps and advantages they often had in those days, therefore lay not so much stress upon that; their courage undoubtedly flowed from an higher spring and better principle, than the company they suffered with.

3. And if precedents and experiences of others to break the ice before you, be so great an advantage, surely we that live in

these latter times have the most and best helps of that nature that ever any people in the world had. You have all their examples recorded for your encouragement, and therefore *think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, as tho' some strange thing had happened to you*, as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. iv. 12. This plea is weighed, and no great weight found in it.

Plea 2. But my nature is soft and tender, my constitution more weak and subject to the impressions of fear than others: some that have robust bodies, and hardy stout minds, may better grapple with such difficulties than I can, who by constitution and education, am altogether unfit to grapple with these torments, that I have not patience enough to hear related, my heart faints and dies within me, if I do but read, or hear of the barbarous usages of the martyrs, and therefore I may well be excused for my fears and faint-heartedness, when the case is like to be my own.

Answer 1. It is a great mistake to think that the mere strength of natural constitution, can carry any one through such sufferings for Christ, or that natural tenderness and weakness divinely assisted, cannot bear the heaviest burden that ever God laid upon the shoulders of any sufferer for Christ. Our suffering and bearing abilities are not from nature, but from grace. We find men of strong bodies and resolute daring minds, have fainted in the time of trial. Dr. Pendleton, in our own story, was a man of a robust and massy body, and a resolute daring mind; yet when he came to the trial, he utterly fainted and fell off. On the other side, what poor feeble bodies have sustained the greatest torments, and out of weakness been made strong! Heb. xi. 34. The virgin Eulalia of Emerita in Portugal, was young and tender, but twelve years old, and with much indulgence and tenderness brought up in an honourable family, being a person of considerable quality; yet how courageously did she sustain the most cruel torments for Christ! When the judge fawned upon her with this tempting language, "Why "wilt thou kill thyself, so young a flower, and so near those "honourable marriages and great dowries thou mightest enjoy?" Instead of returning a retracting or double answer, Eulalia threw down the idol, and spurned abroad with her feet the heap of incense prepared for the censers; and when the executioner came to her, she entertained him with this language: * "Go to, thou hangman, burn, cut, mangle thou "these earthly members; it is an easy matter to break a brittle

* Acts and Mon. V. 1. p. 120.

" substance, but the inward mind thou shalt not hurt." And when one joint was pulled from another, she said, " Behold what a " pleasure it is for them, oh Christ! that remember thy tri- " umphant victories, to attain unto those high dignities." So that our constitutional strength is not to be made the measure of our passive fortitude: God can make the feeblest and tenderest persons stand, when strong bodies, and blustering, resolute, and daring minds faint and fall.

2. Are our bodies so weak, and hearts so tender, that we can bear no sufferings for Christ? Then we are no way fit to be his followers. Christianity is a warfare, and Christians must endure hardships, 2 Tim. ii. 3. Delicacy and tenderness is as odd a sight in a Christian, as it is in a soldier; and we cannot be Christ's disciples, except we deliberate the terms, and having considered well what it is like to cost us, do resolve, in the strength of God, to run the hazard of all with him and for him. It is in vain to talk of a religion that we think not worthy the suffering and enduring any great matter for.

3. And if indeed, reader, thy constitution be so delicate and tender, that thou art not able to bear the thoughts of torments for Christ, how is it that thou art not more terrified with the torments of hell, which all they that deny Christ on earth must feel and bear eternally? Oh, what is the wrath of man, in comparison with the wrath of God! but as the bite of a flea to the rendings of a lion. This is the consideration propounded by Christ in Matth. x. 28. " Fear not them who kill the " body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him " who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The infinite and unsupportable wrath of the great and terrible God, should make our souls shrink and shake at the thoughts of it, rather than the sufferings of the flesh, which are but for a moment.

4. Know that the wisdom and tenderness of thy Father, will proportion the burden thou must bear to thy back that must bear it; he will debate in measure, and not overload thy feeble shoulders: thou shalt find those things easy in trial, that now seem insupportable in the terrible prospect; a way of escape or support will certainly be opened, that thou mayest be able to bear it.

Plea 3. But others plead the sad experiences they have had of their own feebleness and weakness in former trials and exercises of an inferior nature, in which their faith and patience hath failed them: and how can they imagine they shall ever be

able to ſtand in the fierceſt and moſt fiery trial? If we have run with the footmen, and they have wearied us in the land of peace, how ſhall we then contend with horſes in the ſwellings of Jordan, Jer. xii. 5.

Anſwer 1. We are ſtrong or weak in all our trials, be they great or ſmall, according to the aſſiſting grace we receive from above; if he leave us in a common and light trial to our own ſtrength, it will be our over-match, and if he aſſiſt us in great and extraordinary trials, we ſhall be more than conquerors. At one time Abraham could offer up his only ſon to God with his own hand; at another time he is ſo afraid of his life, that he acts very unſuitably to the character of a believer, and was ſhamefully rebuked for it by Abimelech. At one time David could ſay, *Though an hoſt encamp againſt me, I will not fear*; at another time he feigns himſelf mad, and acted beneath himſelf, both as a man, and as a man enriched with ſo much faith and experience. At one time Peter is afraid to be interrogated by a maid; at another time he could boldly confront the whole council, and own Chriſt and his truths to their faces. In extraordinary trials we may warrantably expect extraordinary aſſiſtances, and by them we ſhall be carried through the greateſt, how often ſoever we have failed in ſmaller trials.

2. The deſign and end of God's giving us experience of our own weakneſs in leſſer troubles, is not to diſcourage and daunt us againſt we come to greater, (which is the uſe Satan here makes of it), but to take us off from ſelf-confidence and ſelf-dependence; to make us ſee our own weakneſs, that we may more heartly and humbly betake ourſelves to him in the way of faith and fervent ſupplication.

Plea 4. But ſome will object that they cannot help their fears and tremblings when any danger appears; becauſe fear is the diſeaſe, at leaſt the ſad effect and ſymptom of diſeaſe, with which God hath wounded them; a deep and fixed melancholy hath ſo far prevailed, that the leaſt trouble overcomes them; if any ſad afflictive providence befal, or but threaten them, their fears preſently riſe, and their hearts ſink, ſleep departs, thoughts tumultuate, the blood boils, and the whole frame of nature is put into diſorder. If therefore the Lord ſhould permit ſuch great and dreadful trials to befal them, they can think of nothing leſs than dying by the hand of their own fears, before the hand of any enemy touch them; or, which is a thouſand times worſe, be driven by their own fears into the net of temptation, even to deny the Lord that bought them.

Anſwer, This I know is the ſad caſe of many gracious per-

sons, and I have reason to pity those that are thus exercised: O it is a heavy stroke, a dismal state, a deep wound indeed: but yet the wisdom of God hath ordered this affliction upon his people for gracious ends and uses; hereby they are made the more tender and watchful, circumspect and careful in their ways, that they may shun and escape as many occasions of trouble as they can, being so unable to grapple with them. I say not but there are higher and nobler motives that make them circumspect and tender, but yet the preservation of our own quietness is useful in its place, and it is a mercy if that or any thing else be sanctified to prevent sin, and promote care of duty. This is your clog to keep you from straying.

2. And when you shall be called forth to greater trials, that which you now call your snare, may be your advantage, and that in divers respects.

1. These very distempers of body and mind serve to imbitter the comforts and pleasures of this world to you, and make life itself less desirable to you than it is to others; they much wean your hearts from, and make life more burdensome to you than it is to others, who enjoy more of the pleasure and sweetness of it than you can do. I have often thought this to be one design and end of providence, in permitting such distempers to seize so many gracious persons as labour under them, and providence knows how to make use of this effect to singular purpose and advantage to you, when a call to suffering shall come; this may have its place and use, under higher and more spiritual considerations, to facilitate death, and make your separation from this world the more easy to you *; for though it be a more noble and raised act of faith and self-denial to offer up to God our lives, when they are made most pleasant and desirable to us upon natural accounts, yet it is not so easy to part with them as it is when God hath first imbittered them to us. Your lives are of little value to you now, because of this burdensome clog you must draw after you, but if you should increase your burden by so horrid an addition of guilt, as the denying Christ, or his known truths would do, you would not know what to do with such a life; it would certainly lie upon your hands as a burthen. God knows how to use these things in the way of his providence to your great advantage.

2. Art thou a poor melancholy and timorous person? Cer-

* It was common with the marytrs, to sweeten death to themselves, by reckoning what infirmities it would cure them of, one of his blindness, another of his lameness, &c.

tainly if thou be gracious as well as timorous, this will drive thee nearer to God; and the greater thy dangers are, the more frequent and fervent will thy addresses to him be: thou feelest the need of everlasting arms underneath thee to bear thee up under, and to carry thee thro' smaller troubles, that other persons make nothing of, much more in such deep trials, that put the strongest Christians to the utmost of their faith and patience.

And, *3dly*, What if the Lord will make an advantage out of your weakness, to display more evidently his own power in your support? you know what the apostle saith, 1 Cor. xii. 9, 10. "And he said unto me, my grace is sufficient for thee; for my "strength is made perfect in weakness: most gladly therefore "will I glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may "rest upon me—for when I am weak then am I strong." If his infirmities might serve as a foil to set off the grace of God with a more bright and sparkling lustre, he would rejoice in his infirmities, and so should you: Well then, let not this discourage you, the infirmity of nature you complain of may make death the less terrible; it served to that purpose to blessed Basil, (as you heard before) when his enemy threatened to tear out his liver, he thought it a kindness to have that liver torn out, that had given him so much trouble. It may drive thee nearer to God and minister a fit opportunity for the display of his grace in the time of need.

Plea 5. But what if God should hide his face from my soul in the day of my straits and troubles, and not only so, but permit Satan to buffet me with his horrid temptations and injections, and so I should sail like the ship in which Paul sailed, betwixt these two boisterous seas; what can I suspect less than a shipwreck of my soul, body, and all the comforts of both, in this world, and in that to come?

Answer 1. So far as the fears of such a misery awaken you to pray for the prevention of it, it may be serviceable to your souls, but when it only works distraction and despondency of mind, it is your sin and Satan's snare. The prophet Jeremy made a good use of such a supposed evil by way of deprecation, Jer. xvii. 17. "Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope in the day of evil." *q. d.* in the evil day I have no place of retreat or refuge, but thy love and favour; Lord, that is all I have to depend on, and relieve myself by: I comfort myself against trouble with this confidence, that if men be cruel, yet thou wilt be kind; if they frown, thou wilt smile; if the world cast me out, thou wilt take me in; but if thou shouldest be a terror to me instead of a comforter, if

they afflict my body, and thou affright my soul with thy frowns too; what a deplorable condition shall I be in then! Improve it to such an end as he did, to secure the favour of God, and it will do you no harm.

2. It is not usual for God so estrange himself from his people in trouble, nor to frown upon them when men do. The common evidence of believers stands ready to attest and seal this truth, that Christians never find more kindness from God, than when they feel most cruelty from men for his sake; consult the whole cloud of witnesses, and you will find they have still found the undoubted verity of that tried word, in 1 Pet. iv. 14. That, "the Spirit of glory, and of God, resteth upon sufferers." The expression seems to allude to the dove that Noah sent forth out of the ark, which flew over the watry world, but could not rest herself any where till she returned to the ark. So the Spirit of God is called here the spirit of glory, from his effects and fruits, *viz.* his chearing, sealing, and reviving influences which make men glory and triumph in the most afflicted state. The Spirit of God seems, like that dove, to hover up and down, to flee hither and thither, over this person and that, but resteth not so long upon any, as those that suffer for righteousness sake; there he commonly takes up his abode and residence.

3. And what if it should fall out in some respect according to your fears, that heaven and earth should be both clouded together? Yet it will not be long before the pleasant light will spring up to you again, Psal. cxii. 4. "Unto the upright there ariseth "light in the darkness." You shall have his supporting presence 'till the Comforter do come. When Mr. Glover came within sight of the stake, he suddenly cries out, Oh Austin! *he is come! he is come!*

Plea 6. Oh! but what if my trial should be long, and the siege of temptations tedious? Then I am persuaded I am lost; I am no way able to continue long in a prison, or in tortures for Christ, I have no strength to endure a long siege, my patience is too short to hold out from month to month, and from year to year as many have done. Oh! I dread the thoughts of long-continued trials, I tremble to think what must be the issue.

Answer 1. Cannot you distrust your own strength, and ability, but you must also limit God's? What if you have but a small stock of patience? Cannot the Lord strengthen you with all might in the inner-man, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, according to his glorious power, Col. i. 11. And is it not his promise to confirm you to the end? 1 Cor. i. 8.

You neither know *how much*, nor *how long* you can bear and ſuffer. It is not inherent, but aſſiſting grace, by which your ſuffering abilities are to be meaſured. God can make that little ſtock of patience you have to hold out as the poor widow's cruiſe of oil did, 'till deliverance come; he can enable your patience unto its perfect work, *(i. e.)* to work as extenſively to all the kinds and ſorts of trials, as intenſively to the higheſt degree of trial, and as protenſively to the longeſt duration and continuance of your trials, as he would have it: if this be a marvellous thing in your eyes, muſt it be ſo in God's eyes alſo?

2. The Lord knows the proper ſeaſon to come in to the relief of your ſliding and fainting patience, and will aſſuredly come in accordingly in that ſeaſon; for ſo run the promiſes, "The Lord ſhall judge his people, and repent himſelf for his "ſervants, when he ſeeth that their power is gone, and that "there is none ſhut up or left," Deut. xxxii. 36. *Cum duplicantur lateres venit* Moſes; in the mount of difficulties and extremities it ſhall be ſeen. "The rod of the wicked ſhall not "reſt upon the lot of the righteous, leſt the righteous put forth "their hands unto iniquity," Pſal. cxxv. 3. *Ubi deſinit humanum, ibi incipit divinum auxilium;* God's power watches the opportunity of your weakneſs.

Plea 7. But what if I ſhould be put to cruel and exquiſite tortures, ſuppoſe to the rack, to the fire, or ſuch moſt dreadful ſufferings as other Chriſtians have been? What ſhall I do? Do I think I am able to bear it? Is my ſtrength the ſtrength of ſtone, or are my bones braſs, that ever I ſhould endure ſuch barbarous cruelties? Alas! Death in the mildeſt form is terrible to me: how terrible then muſt ſuch a death be?

Anſwer. Who enabled thoſe Chriſtians you mention to endure theſe things? They loved their lives, and ſenſed their pains as well as you, they had the ſame thoughts and fears, many of them, that you now have; yet God carried them thro' all, and ſo he can you. Did not he make the devouring flames a bed of roſes to ſome of them? Was he not within the fires? Did he not abate the extremity of the torment, and enable weak and tender perſons to endure them patiently and chearfully? Some ſinging in the midſt of flames, others clapping their hands triumphantly, and to the laſt ſight that could be had of them in this world, nothing appeared but ſigns and demonſtrations of joy unſpeakable. Ah friends! we judge of ſufferings by the out-ſide and appearance, which is terrible; but we know not the inſide of ſufferings, which is exceeding com-

fortable. Oh! when ſhall we have done with our unbelieving *ifs* and *buts*, our queſtionings and doubtings of the power, wiſdom, and tender care of our God over us, and learn to truſt *him* over all. Now *the juſt ſhall live by faith*; and he that lives by faith ſhall never die by fear. The more you truſt God, the leſs you will torment yourſelves. I have done; the Lord ſtrengthen, ſtabliſh, and ſettle the trembling and feeble hearts of his people, by what hath been ſo ſeaſonably offered for their relief by a weak hand. *Amen.*

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THE

RIGHTEOUS MAN'S REFUGE.

THE EPISTLE TO THE READER.

Chriſtian Reader,

"IF * Heinſius, when he had ſhut up himſelf in the libra-
" ry at Leyden, reckoned himſelf placed in the very lap of
" eternity, becauſe he converſed there with ſo many divine
" ſouls, and profeſſed, he took his ſeat in it with ſo lofty a ſpi-
" rit and ſweet content, that he heartily pitied all the great
" and rich men of the world, that were ignorant of the happi-
" neſs he there daily enjoyed:" How much more may that ſoul rejoice in its own happineſs, who hath ſhut himſelf up in the chambers of the Divine Attributes, and exerciſeth pity for the expoſed and miſerable multitude that are left as a prey to the temptations and troubles of the world.

That the days are evil, is a truth preached to us by the convincing voice of ſenſe; and that they are like to be worſe, few can doubt that look into the moral cauſes of evil times, the impudent height of ſin, or into the propheſies relating to theſe

* *Plerumque in qua ſimulac pedem poſui, foribus peſſulum obdo, et in ipſo æternitatis gremio inter tot illuſtres animas ſedem mihi ſumo; cum ingenti quidem animo, ut ſubinde magnatum me miſereat qui felicitatem hanc ignorant.* Epiſtola priſmar.

latter days; for whom the ſharpeſt ſufferings are appointed, to make way for the ſweeteſt mercies. A faithful † watchman of our own, hath given us freſh and late warning in theſe words of truth: *Hath God ſaid nothing? doth faith ſee nothing of a flood coming upon us? Is there ſuch a deluge of ſin among us, and doth not that prophecy to us a deluge of wrath? Lift up your eyes, Chriſtians, ſtand, and look through the land, eaſtward and weſtward, northward and ſouthward, and tell me what you ſee? Behold, a flood cometh; a flood of ſin is already broken forth upon us, the fountains of the great deeps are broken up, and the windows of hell are opened,* &c. In ſuch an evil day as this is, happy is the ſoul that hath made God its refuge, even the moſt high God its habitation. He ſhall ſit Noah-like, *Mediis tranquillus in undis*, ſafe from the fear of evil. In conſideration of the diſtreſs of many unprovided ſouls for the miſery that is coming on them, and not knowing how ſhort my time will be uſeful to any, (for I know it cannot be long) I have endeavoured once more, the aſſiſtance of poor Chriſtians in theſe two ſmall treatiſes, one of *fear*, the other of *preparation for the worſt of times*; which, it may be, is the laſt help I ſhall this way be able to afford them. It is therefore my earneſt requeſt to all that fear the Lord, and tremble at his word, to redeem their time with double diligence, becauſe the days are evil; to clear up their intereſt in Chriſt and the promiſes, leſt the darkneſs of their ſpiritul eſtate, meeting with ſuch a night of outward darkneſs, overwhelm them with terrors inſupportable. Some help is offered in this treatiſe to direct the gracious ſoul to its reſt in God: May the bleſſings of his Spirit accompany them, and bleſs them to the ſoul of him that readeth; it will be a matter of joy, beyond all earthly joys, to the heart of,

Thy friend and ſervant in Chriſt,

JOHN FLAVEL.

† Mr. R. A. of Godly Fear, p. 19.

Iſa. xxvi. 20. *Come my People, enter thou into thy chambers, and ſhut thy doors about thee: hide thyſelf as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be over-paſt.*

CHAP. I.

Wherein the literal and real importance of the text is conſidered, the doctrine propounded, and the method of the following diſcourſe ſtated.

Sect. I. MAN being a prudent and proſpecting creature, can never be ſatisfied with preſent ſafety, except he may alſo ſee himſelf well ſecured againſt future dangers. Upon all appearance of trouble, it is natural for him to ſeek a refuge, that he may be able to ſhun what he is loath to ſuffer, and ſurvive thoſe calamities which will ruin the defenceleſs and expoſed multitude. Natural men ſeek refuge in natural things. "The rich man's wealth is his ſtrong city, and as an high "wall in his own conceit," Prov xviii. 11. Hypocrites make lies their refuge, and under falſhood do they hide themſelves, Iſa. xxviii. 15. not doubting but they ſhall ſtand dry and ſafe, when the over-flowing flood lays all others under water. But,

Godly men make God himſelf their hiding-place, to him they have ſtill betaken themſelves in all ages, as often as calamities have befallen the world, Pſal. xlvi. 1. "God is our "refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble." As chickens run under the wings of the hen for ſafety when the kite hovers over them, ſo do they fly to their God for ſanctuary, Pſal. lvi. 3. "At what time I am afraid I will truſt in thee;" *q. d.* Lord, if a ſtorm of trouble at any time overtake me, I will make bold to come under thy roof for ſhelter; and indeed not ſo bold as welcome; it is no preſumption in them after ſo gracious an invitation from their God, "Come, my people, enter "thou into thy chambers."

My friends, a ſound of trouble is in our ears, the clouds gather and blacken upon us more and more: Diſtreſs of nations with perplexity ſeems to be near, our day haſtens to an end, and the ſhadows of the night are ſtretching forth upon us. What greater ſervice therefore can I do for your ſouls, than by the light of this ſcripture (as with a candle in my hand) to lead you

to your chambers, and ſhew you your lodgings in the attributes and promiſes of God, before I take my leave of you, and bid you good night.

O with what ſatisfaction ſhould I part with you, were I but ſure to leave you under Chriſt's wings! It was Chriſt's lamentation over Jeruſalem, that they would not be gathered under his wings, when the Roman eagle was ready to hover over that city; and you know how dear they paid for their obſtinacy and infidelity. Be warned by that dreadful example, and among the reſt of your mercies bleſs God heartily for this, that ſo ſweet a voice ſounds from heaven in your ears this day, this day of frights and troubles; "Come, my people, enter thou in-"to thy chambers," *&c.*

This chapter contains a lovely ſong fitted for the lips of God's Iſrael, notwithſtanding their ſad captivity; for their God was with them in Babylon, and cheered their hearts there with many promiſes of deliverance, and in the myſtical ſenſe, it relates to the new teſtament churches, of whoſe troubles, protections, and deliverances, the Jews in Babylon were a type.

This chapter, though full of excellent and ſeaſonable truths, will be too long to analize; it ſhall ſuffice to ſearch back only to the 17th verſe, where you find the poor captivated church under deſpondency of mind, comparing her condition to that of a woman in travail, who hath many ſharp pains, and bitter throws, yet cannot be delivered, much like that in 2 Kings xix. 3. "The children are come to the birth, and there is no "ſtrength to bring forth."

Againſt this diſcouragement a double relief is applied in the following verſes, the one is a promiſe of full deliverance at laſt; the other an invitation into a ſure ſanctuary and place of defence for the preſent, until the time of their full deliverance came. The promiſe we have in verſe 19. "Thy dead men ſhall "live, together with my dead body ſhall they ariſe: awake and "ſing ye that dwell in the duſt," *&c.* Their captivity was a civil death, and Babylon as a grave to them. So it is elſewhere deſcribed, Ezek. xxxvii. 1, 2, 3, 14. "I will open your graves, "and cauſe you to come up out of your graves, and bring you "into the land of Iſrael." And therefore their deliverance is carried under the notion of a reſurrection in that promiſe.

Object. Yea, (might they reply) the hopes of deliverance at laſt is ſome comfort, but alas, that may be far-off: How ſhall we ſubſiſt till then?

Solut. Well enough, for as you have in that promiſe a ſure ground of deliverance at laſt, ſo in the interim here is a gracious

ous invitation into a place of ſecurity for the preſent, *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers.* In which invitation four things call for our cloſe attention.

1. The form of the invitation, including in it the qualified ſubject, *Come, my people.* God's own peculiar people, who have choſen God for their protection, and reſigned up themſelves ſincerely to him in the covenant, are the perſons here invited, the ſame which he before called the righteous nation that kept the truth, ver. 2. he means thoſe that remained faithful to God, as many of them did in Babylon, witneſs their ſorrow for Sion, Pſal. cxxxvii. *per totum;* and their ſolemn appeal to God, that their hearts were not turned back, nor had their ſteps declined though they were ſore broken in the place of dragons, and covered with the ſhadow of death, Pſal. xliv. 18, 19, 20. Theſe are the people invited to the chambers of ſecurity. And the form of invitation is full of tender compaſſion; *Come, my people;* like a tender father that ſees a ſtorm coming upon his children in the fields, and takes them by the hand, ſaying, Come away, my dear children, haſten home with me, leſt the ſtorm overtake you; or as the Lord ſaid to Noah before the deluge, come thou and all thy houſe into the ark, and God ſhut him in, Gen. vii. 1, 16. This is the form of invitation, *Come, my people.*

2. The privilege invited to; *Enter thou into thy chambers.* There is ſome variety, and indeed variety rather than contrariety in the expoſition of theſe words.

In this all are agreed, that by their chambers, is not meant the chambers of their own houſes, Ezek. xxi. 14. for alas, their houſes were left unto them deſolate; and if not, yet they could be no ſecurity to them now, when neither their own houſes, nor their fortified city, was able to defend them before.

Grotius * expounds it of the grave, and makes theſe chambers the ſame with the chambers of death. *Ite in cubicula,* i. e. *ſepulchra veſtra.* The grave indeed is a place of ſecurity, where God ſometimes hides ſome of his people in troubleſome times, as is plain in Iſa. lvii. 1, 2. but I cannot allow this to be the ſenſe of this text; God doth not comfort his captives with a natural, againſt a civil death, but with protection in their troubles upon earth, as is evident from the ſcope of the whole chapter.

By chambers therefore, others underſtand the chambers of

* Grotius on the place.

Divine Providence, where the saints are hid in evil days. So our Annotators on the place, and no doubt but this is in part the special intendment of the text.

Others understand the attributes and promises of God to be here meant, as well as his providence. And I conceive all three make the sense of the text full, (*i. e.*) the divine attributes engaged in the promises, and exercised or actuated in the providences of God; these are the sanctuaries and refuges of God's people in days of trouble.

Calvin understands it of the quiet repose of the believer's mind in God, but that is rather the effect of his security, than the place of it. It is God's attributes, or his name (which is the same thing) to which the righteous fly and are safe, Prov. xviii. 10.

Object. But you will say, why are they called *their chambers?* Those attributes are not theirs, but God's.

Solut. The answer is easy, though they be God's properties, yet they are his people's privileges, and benefits; for when God makes over himself to them in covenant to be their God, he doth, as it were, deliver to them the keys of all his attributes for their benefit and security; and is as if he should say, my wisdom is yours, to contrive for your good; my power is yours, to protect your persons; my mercy yours, to forgive your sins; my all-sufficiency yours, to supply your wants; all that I am, and all that I have, is for your benefit and comfort. These are the chambers provided for the saints lodgings, and into these they are invited to enter. *Enter thou into thy chambers.* By entering into them understand their actual faith exercised in acts of affiance and resignation to God in all their dangers. So Psal. lvi. 3. "At what time I am afraid (saith "David) I will trust in thee:" *q. d.* Lord, if a storm come I will make bold to shelter myself from it under thy wings by faith; look, as unbelief shuts the doors of all God's attributes and promises against us; so faith opens them all to the soul: and so much of the privilege invited to, which is the second thing.

3. We have here a needful caution for the securing of this privilege to ourselves in evil times, *shut thy doors about thee.* Or as the Syriac renders בעדך behind or after thee, *i. e.* saith Calvin, *Diligenter cavendum ne ulla rimula diaboli ad nos pateat.* Care must be taken that no passage be left open for the devil to creep in after us, and drive us out of our refuge; for so it falls out too often with God's people, when they are at rest in God's name or promises, Satan creeps in by unbelieving doubts and

puzzling objections, and beats them out of their refuge back again into trouble; it is therefore of great concernment, in such times especially, *not to give place to the devil*, as the phrase is, Eph. iv. 17. but cleave to God by a resolved reliance.

4. Lastly, We are to note with what arguments or motives they are prest to betake themselves to this refuge. There are two found in the text, the one working upon their fear, the other upon their hope.

1. That which works upon their fear, is a supposition of a storm coming, the indignation of God will fall like a tempest; this is supposed in the text, and plainly expressed in the words following, "For the Lord cometh out of his place to punish "the inhabitants of the earth," ver. 21.

2. The other is fitted to work upon their hope, though his indignation fall like a storm, yet it will not continue long; it shall be but for a moment, better days, and more comfortable dispensations, will follow. From all which the general observation is this,

Doct. *That the attributes, promises, and providences of God, are the chambers of rest and security, in which his people are to hide themselves, when they foresee the storms of his indignation coming upon the world.*

"The name of the Lord (saith Solomon) is a strong tower; "the righteous run into it, and are safe," Prov. xviii. 10. And his attributes are his name, Exod. xxxiv. 5. For by them he is known, as a man is known by his name, and this his name is a strong tower for his people's security; now what is the use and end of a tower in a city, but to receive and secure the inhabitants when the out-works are beaten to the ground, the wall scaled, and the houses left desolate?

And as it is here resembled to a tower, so in Isa. xxxiii. 16. it is shadowed out unto us by a munition of rocks, "His place "of defence shall be a munition of rocks." How secure is that person that is invironed with rocks on every side? Yea, you will say, but yet a rock is but a cold and barren refuge, tho' other enemies cannot, yet hunger and thirst can invade and kill him there. No, in this rock is a storehouse of provision, as well as a magazine for defence; so it follows, "Bread shall be "given him, and his water shall be sure."

And sometimes it is resembled to us by the wings of a fowl, spread with much tenderness over her young for their defence, Psal. lvii. 1. "Yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make "my refuge, until these calamities be overpast." So Psal. xvii. 8. "Keep me as the apple of thine eye, hide me under the sha-

" dow of thy wings." No part of the body hath more guards upon it, than the apple of the eye. God is as careful to preſerve his people, as men are to preſerve their eyes; *and he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye.* But we need not go from one metaphor to another, to ſhew you where the ſaints refuge is in time of danger; you have a whole bundle of them lying together in that one ſcripture, Pſal. xviii. 2. " The Lord " is my rock and my fortreſs, and my deliverer, my God, my " ſtrength, in whom I will truſt, my buckler, and the horn of " my ſalvation, and my high tower." Where you find all kinds of defence, whether natural or artificial, under a pleaſant variety of apt metaphors, aſcribed to God for the ſecurity of his people.

Now for the caſting of this great point into as eaſy and profitable a method as I can; I ſhall reſolve this general truth into theſe following propoſitions, which are implied or expreſſed in the text and doctrine thence deduced; and the firſt is this;

Prop. 1. *That there are times and ſeaſons appointed by God for the pouring out of his indignation upon the world.*

Prop. 2. *That God's own people are concerned in, and ought to be affected with thoſe judgments.*

Prop. 3. *That God hath a ſpecial and particular care of his people in the days of his indignation.*

Prop. 4. *That God uſually premoniſhes the world, eſpecially his own people, of his judgments before they befal them.*

Prop. 5. *That God's attributes, promiſes, and providences are prepared for the ſecurity of his people, in the greateſt diſtreſſes that befal them in the world.*

Prop. 6. *That none but God's people are taken into thoſe chambers of ſecurity, or can expect his ſpecial protection in evil times.*

And then I ſhall apply the whole in the proper uſes of it.

CHAP. II.

Demonſtrating the firſt propoſition, that there are times and ſeaſons appointed by God for the pouring out of his indignation upon the world.

Sect. 1. THIS is plainly implied in the text, that there are times of indignation appointed to befal the world; yea, and more than this; not only that ſuch times ſhall come, but the duration and continuance is alſo under an appointment.

"Hide thyself for a little moment, until the indignation be "over-paſt." The prophet tells us in Zeph. ii. 2. that theſe ſtormy times are under a decree, and that decree is there compared to a pregnant woman which is to go out her appointed months, and then to travail and bring forth: Even ſo it is in the judgments God brings upon the world. We ſee them not in the days of provocation, *ſed adhuc fœtus in utero latet*, but, all this while it is in the womb of the decree, and at the appointed ſeaſon they ſhall become viſible to the world. As there are in nature fair halcyon days, and cloudy, overcaſt, and ſtormy: So it is in providences, Eccl. vii. 14. "God hath ſet the one "over-againſt the other." Yea, one is the occaſion of the other; for look as the ſun in a hot day exhales abundance of vapours from the earth and ſea, theſe occaſion ſhowers, thunder, and tempeſts, and thoſe again clear the air, and diſpoſe it to fair weather again. So it is here, proſperity is the occaſion of abundance of ſin, this brings on adverſity from the juſtice of God to correct it; adverſity being ſanctified, humbles, reforms, and purges the people of God, and this again by mercy procures their proſperity: So you find the account ſtated in Pſal. cvii. 17. "Fools becauſe of their iniquities are afflicted, then they "cry to the Lord in their troubles, and he ſaveth them out of "their diſtreſſes."

And this appointment of times of diſtreſs is both profitable and neceſſary for the world, eſpecially God's own people in it.

In general, hereby the being and righteouſneſs of God is cleared and vindicated againſt the atheiſm and infidelity of the world, Pſal. ix. 16. "The Lord is known by the judgments "that he executeth." Impunity is the occaſion of many atheiſtical thoughts in the world, Jer. xlviii. 11. "Moab hath been "at eaſe from his youth, and he hath ſettled on his lees, and "hath not been emptied from veſſel to veſſel, neither hath he "gone into captivity; therefore his taſte remaineth in him, and "his ſcent is not changed." So Pſal. lv. 19. "Becauſe they have "no changes, therefore they fear not God." Kingdoms, families, and particular perſons, like ſtanding water and ponds, are apt to corrupt by long continued peace and proſperity; the Lord therefore ſees it neceſſary to purge the world by his judgments; "When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the "world will learn righteouſneſs." Thoſe ſermons that God preaches from heaven by the terrible voice of his judgments, ſtartle and rouze the ſecure world, more than all the warnings and exhortations of his miniſters could ever do. Thoſe that

ſlept ſecurely under our miniſtry, will fear and tremble under his rods; thoſe that are without faith, are not without ſenſe and feeling, their own eyes will affect their hearts, though our words could make no impreſſion on them.

Sect. 2. But of what uſe ſoever theſe national judgments are to others, to be ſure they ſhall be beneficial to God's own people; when others die by fear, they ſhall live by faith; if they be baneful poiſon to the wicked, they ſhall be healthful phyſic to the godly. For,

1. By theſe calamities God will mortify and purge their corruptions; this winter weather ſhall be uſeful to deſtroy and rot thoſe rank weeds, which the ſummer of proſperity bred, Iſa. xxvii. 9. "By this therefore ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged." Phyſic in its own nature is griping and unpleaſant; but very uſeful and neceſſary to purge the body from noxious and malignant humours, which retained, may put life itſelf in hazard: And it is with the body politic, as with the body natural.

2. National judgments drive the people of God nearer to him, and one to another; they drive the people of God to their knees, and make them pray more frequently, more fervently, and more feelingly than they ever were wont to do; in this poſture you find them in ver. 8, 9. of this chapter. "Yea in the way of thy "judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee, the deſire of "our ſouls is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With "my ſoul have I deſired thee in the night, yea, with my ſpirit "within me will I ſeek thee early."

3. In a word, by theſe diſtractions and diſtreſſes of nations, the people of God are more weaned from the world, and made to long more vehemently after heaven; being now convinced by experience that this is not their reſt. When all things are tranquil and proſperous, God's own people are but too apt to fall aſleep and dream of pleaſure and reſt on earth, to ſay as Job in his proſperity, "I ſhall die in my neſt, I ſhall multiply my days "as the ſand." And then are their heads and hearts filled with many projects and deſigns, to promote their comforts, and make proviſion for their accommodations on earth: the multiplicity of earthly cares and comforts take up their time and thoughts too much, and make them that they mind death and eternity too little. But ſaith God, this muſt not be ſo, things muſt not go on at this rate, the proſperous world muſt not thus enchant my people; I muſt imbitter the earth that I may thereby ſweeten heaven the more to them; when they find no reſt below, they will ſurely ſeek it above.

Theſe, and ſuch like, are the gracious deſigns and ends of God

in shaking the world by his terrible judgments, but yet, though national troubles must necessarily come, the wisest of men cannot positively determine the precise time of those judgments; we may indeed, by the signs of the times, discern their near approach; yet our judgment can be but probable and conjectural, seeing there are tacit conditions in the dreadfullest threatenings, Jer. xviii. 7, 8. Jonah iii. 9, 10. And such is the merciful nature of God, that he oft-times turns away his anger from his people, when it seems ready to pour down upon them, Psal. lxxviii. 38. The consideration whereof no way indulges security, but encourages to repentance and greater fervency in prayer.

CHAP. III.

Opening and confirming the second proposition, viz. *That God's own people are much concerned in, and ought to be suitably affected with those judgments that befal the nation wherein they live.*

Sect. 1. IF God's people have no concernment in these things, why are they called upon in this text, to turn into their chambers, hide themselves, and shut their doors, till the indignation be over-past? Certainly though God hath better provided for them than others, yet they are two ways concerned in these cases as much as others: *viz.*

1. Upon a political
2. Upon a religious

} Account.

1. Upon a political account, as they are members of the community, and so are equally concerned in the good or evil that befal the nation in which they live, their cabins must follow the fate of the ship in which they sail, their lives, liberties, estates, and interest sink and swim with the public. The good figs were carried away with the bad, Jer. xxiv. 5. In these outward respects it often-times bears as hard upon the righteous as upon the wicked. Ezek. xxi. 3. "I will draw forth my "sword out of his sheath, and will cut off from thee the righ-"teous and the wicked." In these outward respects, as it is with the good, so with the sinner, Eccl. ix. 2. The same fire that burns the dry tree, often-times burns the green tree too, Ezek. xx. 47. Grace is above all hazards, but creature-enjoyments and comforts are not. The sins of the Sodomites involve

not only their own houſes and eſtates, but Lot's alſo, in the ruin and overthrow; wicked men often fare the better for the company of the godly, and the godly often fare the worſe for the company of the wicked.

And it is not to be wondered at, if we conſider that even the ſaints themſelves have an hand in the provocation of theſe judgments, as well as others, Deut. xxxii. 19. "And when the "Lord ſaw it, he abhorred them becauſe of the provoking of his "ſons and of his daughters." We have contributed to the common heap of guilt, and therefore muſt juſtify God if we partake with others in the common calamity.

2. They are greatly concerned in ſuch judgments upon a religious and Chriſtian account, for it is uſual for the flood of God's judgments not only to ſweep away our civil and natural, but our ſpiritual and beſt enjoyments and comforts. Thus the ordinances of God ceaſed in Babylon, and there the faithful bewailed their miſery upon that account, Pſal. cxxxvii. *per totum*; "we wept when we remembered thee, O Zion." Not only Iſrael flies, but the *ark* is taken priſoner by the enemy, 1 Sam. iv. 11. And you find the people of God more deeply concerned upon this account, than for all their outward loſſes and others ſufferings, Zeph. iii. 18. "I will gather them of thee that "are ſorrowful for the ſolemn aſſemblies, to whom the re"proach of it was a burthen." For by how much our ſouls are more excellent than our bodies, and the concerns of eternity over-balance thoſe of time; by ſo much the more are we concerned in the loſs of our ſpiritual, more than of our temporal mercies and enjoyments.

Grace indeed cannot be loſt, but the means and inſtruments by which it is begotten may; the golden candleſtick is one of the moveables in God's houſe, Rev. ii. 5.

Thus you ſee a twofold concernment that the people of God have in the effects of national judgments.

Sect. 2. This being ſo, how ſhould all that fear God be affected with the appearances and ſigns of his indignation? So was David, Pſal. cxix. 120. "My fleſh trembleth for fear of thee, "and I am afraid of thy judgments." He that feared not a bear, a lion, a Goliah, yet trembleth at God's judgment. So did Habakkuk, chap. iii. ver. 16. "When I heard, my belly "trembled, my lips quivered at the voice, rottenneſs entered "into my bones." Expreſſions denoting the deepeſt ſeizures of fear and greateſt conſternations; not that I would perſuade you to ſuch ſlaviſh fear, or unchriſtian dejection, as it is not only ſinful in itſelf, but the cauſe and inlet of many other ſins: but

to a due ſenſe both of the evils of miſery that will befal the nation when God's indignation comes upon it; and the evils of ſin that have incenſed it; and to ſuch a fear of both as may ſeaſonably awaken us to the uſe of all preventing remedies. And firſt,

1. O that all would lay to heart the national miſeries that God's indignation threatens upon us. It is ſaid, Pſal. cvii. 34. "A fruitful land is turned into barrenneſs for the wickedneſs of "them that dwell therein." It was long ſince told England by one of its faithful watchmen *, 'The nation and church in 'which we are, is the common ſhip in which we are all em-'barked, and if this in judgment be caſt away, whether daſh-'ed againſt the rocks of any foreign power, or ſwallowed up 'in the quickſands of domeſtic diviſions, it muſt need ha-'zard all the paſſengers: Or if you were ſure, that for your 'parts you might be ſafe, would it not be a bitter thing to 'ſtand upon the ſhore, and ſee ſuch a glorious veſſel as this 'nation is, to be caſt away? To ſee this glorious land defaced, 'the bleſſed goſpel polluted, the golden candleſtick removed, 'it cannot but affect men that have any bowels.

'Or if this move you not, yet to ſee a ſtranger to lord it in 'thy habitation, and thy dwelling-place to caſt thee out; for 'your delightſome dwellings, your fruitful, pleaſant, and well-'tilled fields to be made a prey; for you to ſow, and another 'to reap, *impias has ſegetes*; for the delicate woman upon 'whom the wind muſt not blow, to be expoſed to the luſt and 'cruelty of an enemy, and be glad to fly away naked to prolong 'a miſerable life, which they would be glad to part with for 'death, were it not for fear of the exchange. For the tender 'mother to look upon the child of her womb, and conſider, 'muſt this child in whom I have placed the hope of my age; 'for,

Omnis in Aſcanio ſtat chari cura parentis;

'He that hath been ſo tenderly bred up, muſt he fall into the 'rough hands of a bloody ſoldier, ſkilful to deſtroy? It had 'been well for me if God had given me dry breaſts, or a miſ-'carrying womb, rather than to bring forth children unto 'murtherers; or if you might be ſafe, how could you endure 'to ſee the miſeries that ſhould come upon your people, and 'the deſtruction of your kindred." Thus far he. But alas! What ſecurity have any of us as to our earthly comforts from the common calamity? We may pleaſe ourſelves as Baruch did, Jer.

* Mr. Strong.

xlv. 4, 5. and dream of exemption, but by ſo much the greater will our diſtreſs be, when it ſhall ſurprize us.

2. You that are the people of God ought to be deeply affected with the ſpiritual miſeries that threaten us in the day of God's indignation: do you conſider what the removing the candleſtick out of its place is? A departing goſpel, the going down of the ſun upon the prophets, the loſs of your ſweet ſabbaths, and goſpel feaſts, and the groſs darkneſs of popery to fill the earth: O it is hard parting with theſe things. It is ſaid, 1 Sam. vii. 2. when the ark was removed, "that all the houſeof "Iſrael lamented after the Lord." Pity your own ſouls, and be deeply affected with the miſery of others, the poor Chriſtleſs world, who are like to periſh for want of viſion, Prov. xxix. 18. In the year 1072, ſaith Matthew Paris, preaching was ſuppreſſed at Rome, and then letters were framed by ſome as coming from hell; in which the devil gives them thanks for the multitude of ſouls ſent to him that year.

3. But eſpecially labour to affect your hearts with the ſin that have incenſed God's indignation: So did the ſaints in Jeruſalem, Ezek. ix. 4. they ſighed and mourned for all the abominations committed in it. So did Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 7. "He vexed "his righteous ſoul from day to day." So did David, Pſal. cxix. 136. "Rivers of water run down mine eyes, becauſe men "kept not thy law." O who that loves God can refrain tears, to ſee the God of pity, the God of tender mercies, a Father full of bowels of compaſſion, ſo incenſed and provoked to indignation! Oh, it is an heart-melting conſideration where there is any ingenuity. If our afflictions grieve God to the heart, as it doth, Judges x. 16. our ſouls ſhould be grieved for his diſhonour.

4. To conclude, get upon your hearts ſuch a ſenſe of God's indignation as may quicken you to the uſe of preventing duties. So Amos iv. 12. "Becauſe I will do this, prepare to meet "thy God, O Iſrael." So the prophet, Zeph. ii. 1, 2. "Gather yourſelves together before the decree bring forth." It was Moſes's honour to ſtand in the breach, Pſal. cvi. 23. And Abraham's to plead ſo with God, *though he did not prevail.*

CHAP. IV.

Confirming the third propoſition. viz. *That God hath a ſpecial and peculiar care of his own people in the days of his indignation.*

Sect. I. PROPRIETY and relation engages care and ſollicitude in times of danger; we ſee God hath put ſuch a ſtorge, and inclination into the very creatures, that they will expoſe themſelves to preſerve their young; and it cannot be imagined that the Fountain of pity which dropt this tenderneſs into the bowels of the creatures, ſhould not abound with it himſelf; is there ſuch ſtrong inclination in the very birds of the air, that they will hazard their own lives to ſave their young; much more is God ſollicitous for his people, Iſa. xxxi. 5. *As birds flying*, &c. to their neſt when their young are in danger: *So will the Lord of Hoſts defend Jeruſalem.* No mother is more ſollicitous for her deareſt child in danger and diſtreſs, than the Lord is for his people. Iſa. xl. 15. "Can a woman forget "her ſucking child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the "ſon of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not for-"get thee." A woman [the more affectionate ſex] forget her child, a piece of herſelf, her ſucking child, which together with milk from her breaſt, draws love from the heart! This may rather be ſuppoſed, than that the Lord ſhould forget his people.

Two things muſt here be cleared. 1. That it is ſo. 2. Why it is ſo.

1. That it is ſo, will appear from,

1. Scripture emblems.
2. Scripture promiſes.
3. Scripture inſtances.

1. Scripture emblems; and among many, I will, upon this occaſion, ſingle out two or three principal ones. in Ezek. v. 1, 2, 3. "And thou Son of man, take thee a ſharp knife, take thee "a barber's razor, and cauſe it to paſs upon thine head, and "upon thy beard, then take thee balances to weigh and divide "the hair; thou ſhalt burn with fire a third part in the midſt "of the city, when the days of the ſiege are fulfilled; and "thou ſhalt take a third part, and ſmite about it with a knife; "and a third part thou ſhalt ſcatter in the wind, and I will draw "out a ſword after them: thou ſhalt alſo take thereof a few in "number, and bind them in thy ſkirts." You find this truth

ſhadowed out in this excellent emblem; Jeruſalem, the capital city, is the head; the numerous inhabitants are the hair; the king of Babylon the razor; the weighing it in balances is the exactneſs of God's procedure in judgment with them; the fire, knife, and wind, are the various judgments to which the people were appointed; the hiding of a few in the prophet's ſkirt, is the care of God for the preſervation of his own remnant in the common calamity. This is one emblem clearing this point. And then Ezek. ix. 3, 4. the ſame truth is preſented to us in another emblem, as lively and ſignificant as the former. "And behold, ſix men came from the way of the higher gate, "which lieth toward the north, and every man a ſlaughter-"weapon in his hand, and one among them was cloathed in li-"nen, with a writer's inkhorn by his ſide, and they went in, "and ſtood before the brazen altar; and the glory of the "God of Iſrael was gone up from the cherub, whereupon he "was to the threſhold of the houſe, and he called to the man "cloathed in linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his ſide; "and the Lord ſaid unto him, Go through the midſt of the "city, through the midſt of Jeruſalem, and ſet a mark upon "the foreheads of the men that ſigh, and cry for all the abomi-"nations that be done in the midſt thereof." The men that had the charge of the city are the angels appointed for that ſervice; ſome with ſlaughter-weapons, whoſe work it was to deſtroy; but one among them had a writer's inkhorn by his ſide, and he was employed to take the names, and mark the perſons of God's faithful ones among them, whom the Lord intended to preſerve and hide in that common overthrow and deſolation of the city, and theſe were to be all marked, man by man, before the deſtroying angel was to begin his bloody work. Oh! ſee the tender care of God over his upright mourning ſervants! Once more, the ſame truth is repreſented in a third emblem, Mal. iii. 17. "And they ſhall be mine, ſaith the Lord, in the day "that I make up my jewels, and I will ſpare them as a "man ſpareth his own ſon that ſerveth him:" where the world is compared to an houſe on fire; God to the maſter and father of the family, the wicked to the uſeleſs lumber therein; the ſaints to the children and jewels in the houſe; about theſe his firſt and principal care of preſervation is exerciſed, theſe he will be ſure to ſave, whatever become of the reſt. Thus you have the choſen emblems that illuſtrate this comfortable truth.

2. As theſe ſcripture-emblems illuſtrate it, ſo there as many excellent ſcripture-promiſes to confirm it, Iſa. xxxii. 2. "A

" man shall be for an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert " from the tempest: as rivers of water in a dry place." This man is the man Christ Jesus; the tempests spoken of, are the miseries and calamities of war, which make the land on which it falls, an hot, dry, and weary land; in the midst and rage whereof, Christ shall be to his faithful ones a covert for protection, a river of water for supply, and a shadow for refreshment; that is to say, whatsoever shall be necessary either for their safety or comfort. Christ is not only a shadow to his people from the wrath of God, but also from the rage of men. Again, Zech. ii. 5. " I will be a wall of fire round about:" alluding to travellers in the desart, who, to prevent danger from wild beasts in the night, use to make a circular fire round about the place where they ly down to rest, and this fire was as a wall to secure them. You have the like gracious promise also made to the poor captivated church, in Ezek. xi. 16. " Although " I have cast them far off among the Heathen, and scattered " them among the countries, yet will I be to them as a little " sanctuary in the countries where they shall come."

A little sanctuary. The * word is variously rendered and expounded; some adverbially, and render it *pauliſper*, a sanctuary for a little while, *viz.* during their danger, at the shortness of which this adverb points: so Junius. Others adjectively, as we translate it, *templum paucorum*, as Vatablus. There was but an handful of them, and God would be as a sanctuary to secure and protect that remnant.

3. And all these promises have in all ages been faithfully fulfilled to the saints. You have an excellent scripture for this, 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5, 6. when the flood was brought upon the old world, there was one Noah a righteous man in it, and for him God provided an ark. When Sodom was overthrown, there was one Lot in it, a just man, and God secured him out of danger; upon which that comfortable conclusion is built, ver. 9. " The Lord " knows how to deliver the godly." When Jerusalem was destroyed, a Pella was provided as a refuge for the godly there. Remarkable is that place to this purpose, Isa. xxv. 4. " Thou " hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in " his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, " when the blast of the terrible one is as a storm against the " wall." And this hath God been not only once or twice, but in all ages, Psal. xc. 1. " Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place

* מעון.

" in all generations;" or as the Hebrew, in generations and generations. What he hath been in former generations to his diſtreſſed people, that he is, and will be without alteration in all generations.

Section II. Yet we muſt remember, that all who are preſerved in common calamities, are not the people of God; nor are all that are indeed his people preſerved: he hath people enough to divide into two ranks, as the huſbandman his corn, ſome for the mill, and ſome to reſerve for ſeed. There be ſtars enough in the heaven to ſhine in both hemiſpheres, and there are ſaints enough in the world, ſome to ſhine in heaven, and ſome to preſerve the church on earth.

1. All that are preſerved are not the people of God. In the ark a wicked Ham was preſerved, and thoſe that were preſerved in Egypt, many of them were afterwards deſtroyed for their unbelief, Jude 5. So Ezekiel's viſion, a part even of thoſe hairs which were ſpared were afterwards caſt into the fire, Ezek. v. 4. Preſervation from the dominion of ſin, and the wrath to come, is peculiar to God's own people; but as for temporal deliverances, we cannot infer that concluſion.

2. Nor yet can we ſay that all God's people ſhall be preſerved; that promiſe, Zeph. ii. 3. leaves it upon a may-be; many a precious Chriſtian hath fallen in the common calamity; they have been preſerved in, but not from trouble.

But it is uſual with God to preſerve ſome in the foreſt judgments: and the grounds of it are,

1. Becauſe ſome muſt be left as a ſeed to propagate and preſerve the church, which is perpetual, and can never fail; he never ſo overthrows nations as Sodom was overthrown, Iſa. i. 9. This was the ground of that promiſe, Jer. xxx. 11. "For "I am with thee, ſaith the Lord, to ſave thee, though I make "a full end of all nations whither I have ſcattered thee, yet will "I not make a full end of thee." And of that plea, Amos vii. 2. "O Lord God, forgive, I beſeech thee; by whom ſhall Jacob riſe? "for he is ſmall." Except the Lord had left a ſmall remnant, we had been as Sodom. Remarkable to this purpoſe is that ſcripture, Iſa. vi. 13. "But yet in it ſhall be a tenth, and it ſhall re-"turn, and ſhall be eaten: as the teil-tree, and as an oak, "whoſe ſubſtance is in them when they caſt their leaves; ſo "the holy ſeed ſhall be the ſubſtance thereof." This preſerved remnant is the holy ſeed by which the church is propagated and continued, Pſal. cii. 28.

2. Becauſe God will, even in this world, own and reward the fears and ſorrows of his people for the ſins of the times, and

ſufferings of the church, with the joy and comfort of better times, and a participation of Sion's conſolation; ſo Iſa. lxvi. 10. *Rejoice ye with Jeruſalem, ye that have mourned for her.* They that have ſown in tears, do ſometimes live to reap in joy, Pſal. cxxv. 6. They ſhall ſay as Iſa. xxv. 9. "Lo this is our God, "we have waited for him, and he is come to ſave us." And thoſe that live not to reap down in this world the harveſt of their own prayers and tears, ſhall be no loſers: a full and better reward ſhall be given them in heaven, Iſa. lvii. 22.

3. Becauſe the preſerved remnant of ſaints are they that muſt actually give unto God the glory of all his providential adminiſtrations in the world, both of judgments and mercies upon others, and towards themſelves: "They that go down to the "pit do not celebrate his praiſe; the living, the living, they "praiſe him," Iſa. xxxviii. 18, 19. Thus when God turned back Zion's captivity, the remnant of the ſaints that were preſerved were they that recorded his praiſe, Pſal. cxxvi. 1, 2. "Then was our mouth filled with laughter." And fully to this ſenſe is that ſcripture, Pſal. cii. 19, 20, 21. "He delivers "thoſe that are appointed to death," *i. e.* that men had doomed to death, "that they may declare the name of the Lord in "Zion, and his praiſe in Jeruſalem."

4. The hiding of the ſaints in the evil days is the greateſt diſcovery of the hand of God in the world; when he hides them, he ſhews himſelf, and that both to the ſaints, and to their enemies.

It is one of the moſt glorious myſteries of providence that ever the world beheld, *viz.* the ſtrange and wonderful protection of poor helpleſs Chriſtians from the rage and fury of their mighty and malicious enemies; though they walk viſibly among them, yet they are, as it were, hid from their hands, but not from their eyes: So, Jer. i. 18. you find God made that prophet among the envious princes, and againſt an enraged and mighty king, *as a defenced city, and as an iron pillar, and as a brazen wall.* And indeed it was eaſier for them to conquer and take the ſtrongeſt fort or garriſon, than that ſingle perſon, who yet walked day by day naked among them. So Luther, a poor monk, was made invincible, all the papal power could not touch him, for God hid him. All the world againſt one Athanaſius, and yet not able to deſtroy him, for God hid him. This is the diſplay of the glorious power of God in the world, and he hath much honour by it.

Well then, if there be a God that takes care of his own in

evil days; do not you be diſtractingly careful what will become of you in ſuch times; you cannot ſee how it is poſſible for you to eſcape; but, 2 Pet. ii. 4, 5, 6. the Lord knows how to deliver when you do not. Little did Lot know the way and manner of his preſervation, till God opened it to him; nor Noah, till God contrived it for him: there was no way to be contrived by them for eſcape: he that knew how to deliver them, can deliver you alſo.

Leave yourſelves to God's diſpoſe, it ſhall certainly be to your advantage; the church is his peculiar care; Iſa. xxviii. 3. "I the Lord do keep it, I will water it every moment; leſt "any hurt it, I will keep it night and day."

The more you commit yourſelves to his care, the more you engage it, Iſa. xxvi. 3. "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, "whoſe mind is ſtayed on thee: becauſe he truſteth in thee." He will certainly find a place of ſafety for his people under, or in heaven.

Neither be too much dejected when the number of viſible profeſſors ſeems but ſmall; think not the church will periſh when it is brought ſo low. This was Elijah's caſe, he thought he had been left alone, that religion had been preſerved in his ſingle perſon, as the *phœnix* of the world; but ſee, 1 Kings xix. 18. God hath enough left, if we were all in our graves, to continue religion in the world; it concerns him more than you to look to that.

CHAP. V.

Evincing the fourth propoſition, viz. That God uſually premoniſheth the world, eſpecially his own people, of his judgments before they befal them.

Sect. I. GOD firſt warns, and then ſmites, he delights not to ſurprize men; when indignation was coming, he tells his people of it in the text, and admoniſheth them to hide themſelves. "Surely the Lord will do nothing, but he "revealeth his ſecrets to his ſervants the prophets," Amos iii. 7. Thus when the flood was to come upon the old world, he gave them 120 years warning of it, Gen. vi. 3. compared with 1 Pet. iii. 19. So when Sodom was to be deſtroyed, God would not hide it from Abraham; Gen. xviii. 17. "Shall I hide from "Abraham the thing that I do?" The like diſcovery was made unto Lot, Gen. xix. 12, 13, 14. So when the captivity was at

hand, Ezekiel was commanded to give the Jews ſolemn warning of it from God, Ezek. iii. 17. "Hear the word at my "mouth, and give them warning from me."

And when their city and temple were to be deſtroyed by the Romans, how plainly did Chriſt foretel them of it by his own mouth! Luke xix. 43, 44. "Thine enemies ſhall caſt a trench "about thee, and compaſs thee round, and keep thee in on "every ſide, and lay thee even with the ground, and thy chil-"dren within thee, and they ſhall not leave in thee one ſtone "upon another; becauſe thou knoweſt not the time of thy "viſitation." Joſephus * alſo tells us, that a little before the execution of this judgment upon them, a voice was heard in the temple, *Migremus hinc, i. e.* Let us go hence; which voice Tacitus alſo in his annals, mentions, *Audita major humana vox, excedere Deos, ſimul ingens motus excedentium.* It was more than a human voice, telling them God was departing from them, and withal there was heard the ruſhing noiſe, as of ſome that were going out of the temple.

And as there were extraordinary premonitions of approaching judgments, by revelation to the prophets of old, and ſigns from heaven, ſo there ſtill are ſtanding and ordinary rules by which the world may be admoniſhed of God's judgments before they come upon them.

And the general rule, by which men may diſcern the indignation of God before it comes, is this:

*** *When the ſame provocations and evils are found in one nation, which have brought down the wrath of God upon another nation; this is an evident ſign of God's judgment at the door.* For God is unchangeably holy and juſt, and will not favour that in one people, which he hath puniſhed in another; nor bleſs that in one age, which he hath curſed in another. And therefore that which hath been a ſign of judgment to one, muſt be ſo to all.

Here it is that the carcaſes of thoſe ſinners, whoſe ſins had caſt them away, are, as it were caſt upon the ſcripture ſhore, for a warning to all others that they ſteer not the ſame ill courſe they did, 1 Cor. x. 9. "Now theſe things were our examples." The Iſraelites are made examples to us, plainly intimating, that if we tread the ſame path, we muſt expect the ſame puniſhment. Let us therefore conſider what were the evils that provoked God's judgments againſt his ancient people, whom he was ſo loath to

* *Joſeph. de Bell. Jud. lib.* vii, *cap.* 2. *Tacit. Annal. lib.* xv.

give up, Hoſ. xi. 8. and ſo long ere he did give up, Jer. xv. 9. and we ſhall find, by the concurrent accounts that the prophets give,

1. That God's worſhip among them was generally mixed and corrupted with their own inventions; for ſo it is ſaid, Pſal. cvi. 40, 41: "They went a-whoring with their own inventions." And this ſo inflamed the wrath of God, who is a jealous God, and tender over his own honour, that he abhorred his own inheritance; yea, he expreſſes himſelf, as a man doth, whoſe heart is broken by the unfaithfulneſs of his wife, Ezek. vi. 9. Upon this account his profeſſing people became the generation of his wrath, Jer. vii. 29, 30.

2. Incorrigible obſtinacy under gentler correction, Amos iv. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12. Scarcity, mildews, peſtilence, and ſword, had been upon them; and ſtill thoſe that remained, though ſaved as a brand out of the fire, in which their fellow-ſinners periſhed, would not return to God; and this haſtened on the general ruin, ver. 12. This preſages the ruin of nations indeed.

3. Stupidity and ſenſeleſſneſs of God's hand was a ſad omen, and cauſe of that peoples ruin; ſo Iſa. xxvi. 10, 11. "Lord, "when thy hand is lifted up, they will not ſee." No nor yet when his hand is laid on, Iſa. xlii. 24, 25. It is not ſome ſmall drop of God's anger, that paſſes without obſervation, but the *fury of his anger; not ſome light ſkirmiſh of his judgments with them, but the ſtrength of battle:* not in a corner upon ſome particular perſon, or family, but that which ſet him on fire round about; yet all this could not awaken them. "He hath pour-"ed upon him the fury of his anger, and the ſtrength of battle, "and it hath ſet him on fire round about, yet he knew it not, "and it burned him, yet he laid it not to heart." Prodigious ſtupidity! to be in the midſt of flames, yea, to be ſeized by them, and deſtroyed ſooner than awakened. So you find again in Hoſ. vii. 9. "Gray hairs were here and there upon Ephraim, yet he "knew it not." Youth and age are eaſily diſtinguiſhed, and gray hairs do plainly diſtinguiſh them, being the plain tokens of a declining ſtate, yet they took no notice of them. Such ſtupidity is evermore the forerunner of miſery.

4. Perſecution of God's faithful miniſters and people, was another forerunning ſign of their ruin, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. "They mocked the meſſengers of God, and deſpiſed his words, "and miſuſed his prophets, until the wrath of the Lord aroſe "againſt his people, till there was no remedy." There were alſo a number of upright ſouls among them, that deſired to worſhip God according to his own preſcription, but a ſnare was

laid for them in Mizpah, and a net ſpread upon Tabor; and therefore was judgment towards that people, Hoſ. v. 1. Mizpah and Tabor were places in the way lying betwixt Samaria and Jeruſalem, where the true worſhip of God was, and there was informers or ſpies ſet by the prieſts to intercept ſuch as would venture to ſerve God at Jeruſalem, according to his own preſcription; this alſo foreboded the judgments of God upon that nation.

5. The decay of the life and power of godlineſs among them, plainly foreſhewed their ruin at hand, Hoſ. iv. 18. *Their drink is ſour*, where, under the *metaphor* of dead and ſour drink, which hath loſt its ſpirit, and is become flat; their formal, heartleſs, and perfunctory duties are ſeverely taxed and condemned.

6. To conclude, the mutual animoſities, and feuds, among that profeſſing people, evidently ſhewed judgment to be at the door. Hoſ. ix. 7. "The days of viſitation are come, the days of "recompenſe are come, Iſrael ſhall know it; the prophet is a "fool, the ſpiritual man is mad, for the multitude of thine ini-"quity; and the great hatred." This great hatred was one of the greateſt ſins, and ſaddeſt ſigns upon them. This ſpirit of enmity ſowed by the devil among them, haſtened their calamity. If Ephraim will envy Judah, and Judah vex Ephraim, the common enemy ſhall part the fray: when the whole nation was under water, and the Roman armies under the very walls of Jeruſalem, their own hiſtorians tell us, what bitter contentions and ſharp conflicts continued among them to the very laſt, theſe things muſt be looked upon by all wiſe and conſiderate men, no otherwiſe than we look upon glaring meteors, and blazing comets portending judgment and ruin at the door. We have had indeed terrible ſigns in heaven, a dreadful rod of God ſhaken over us of late, which all men ought to behold with trembling; yet I muſt ſay thoſe moral ſigns of judgments forementioned, are much more terrible and portentous. According therefore to the evidence of theſe ſigns among us, let all upright hearts be affected and awakened with expectations of God's righteous judgments. It is indeed below faith to expect evil days with deſpondency and diſtraction; but ſurely it is a noble exerciſe of faith, ſo to expect them, as to make due preparation for them.

Section. 2. And if we enquire for what end God gives ſuch warning to the world, and premoniſhes them from heaven of the judgments that are coming on the earth, know that he doth it upon a threefold account.

1. To prevent their execution.

2. To leave the careleſs inexcuſable.

3. To make them more tolerable and eaſy to his own people.

1. Warning is given with a deſign to prevent the execution of judgments; this is plain from Amos iv. 12. "Therefore will I "do this unto thee;" there is warning given; "and becauſe I "will do this, prepare to meet thy God, O Iſrael:" there is the gracious deſign of preventing it, by bringing them ſeaſonably upon their knees at the foot of an angry God: you ſee the Lord expects it from all his children, that they fall at his feet in deep humiliation, and fervent interceſſion, whenever he goes forth in the way of judgment. What elſe was the deſign of God in ſending Jonah to Nineveh with that dreadful meſſage, but to excite them to repentance, and prevent their ruin? This Jonah gueſſed at, and therefore declined the meſſage, to ſecure his credit, well knowing, that if they took warning and repented, the gracious nature of God would ſoon melt into compaſſion over them: free grace would make him appear as a liar among the people; for to that ſenſe his own words ſound, Jonah iv. 2. "Was not "this my ſaying, when I was yet in my country, Therefore I "fled before unto Tarſhiſh, for I knew that thou art a gracious "God." *q. d.* I thought before-hand it would come to this; I knew how willing thou art to be prevented by repentance; therefore to ſecure my credit, I fled to Tarſhiſh.

2. He forewarns of judgments to leave the incorrigible wholly inexcuſable, that thoſe who have neither ſenſe of ſin, nor fear of judgment before, might have no cloak for their folly, nor plea for themſelves afterward; "What wilt thou ſay when he ſhall "puniſh thee?" Jer. xiii. 21, 22. *q. d.* What plea or apology is left thee, after ſo many fair warnings? You cannot ſay you were ſurprized before you were admoniſhed, or ruined before you were warned.

3. God warns of judgments before they come, to make them the more eaſy to his people when they come indeed; thus in John xvi. 4. Chriſt foretold his diſciples of their approaching ſufferings, that when they come, they ſhould not be found amazed at them, or unprovided for them; for unexpected miſeries are aſtoniſhing to the beſt men, and deſtructive to wicked men, Luke xvii. 26, 27, 28.

Well then, if it be ſo, let all that are wiſe in heart conſider the ſigns of the times, and ſeaſonably hearken to God's warnings. "The Lord's voice crieth to the city, and the man of "wiſdom ſhall ſeek thy name; hear ye the rod, and who hath "appointed it," Mic. vi. 9. It is our wiſdom to way-lay our

troubles, and provide for the worſt eſtate, whilſt we enjoy the beſt: happy is he that is at once believing and praying for good days, and preparing for the worſt. Noah's example is our advantage, Heb. xi. 7. "Who, by faith being warned of God, of "things not ſeen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark." Preventing mercies are the moſt raviſhing mercies, Pſal. lix. 10. And preventing calamities are the foreſt calamities, Amos ix. 10.

And let us heartily bewail the ſupineneſs and careleſſneſs of the world in which we live, who take no notice of God's warnings, but put the evil day far from them, Amos vi. 3. who will admit no fear, till they are paſt all hope; they ſee God houſing his ſaints apace, yet will not ſee the evil to come from which God takes them, Iſa. lvii. 1, 2. "The righteous periſheth, and "no man layeth it to heart; and merciful men are taken away, "none conſidering that the righteous is taken away from the "evil to come. He ſhall enter into peace, they ſhall reſt in "their beds, each one walking in his uprightneſs." They hear the cry of ſin which is gone up to heaven, but cry not for the abominations that are committed, nor tremble at the judgments that they will procure.

O careleſs ſinners, drowned in ſtupidity, and ſleeping like Jonah, under the hatches, when others are upon their knees and at their wits-end! Do ſaints tremble, and are you ſecure? Have not you more reaſon to be afraid than they; if judgments come, the greateſt harm it can do them, is but to haſten them to heaven; but as for you, it may hurry you away to hell: they only fear tribulation in the way; but you will not fear damnation in the end. Believe it, reader, in days of common calamity both heaven and hell will fill apace.

CHAP. VI.

Demonſtrating the fifth propoſition, viz. That God's attributes, promiſes, and providences, are prepared for the ſecurity of his people, in the greateſt diſtreſſes that can befal them in the world.

Sect. I. HAVING more briefly diſpatched the foregoing preliminary propoſitions, it remains that we now more fully open this fifth propoſition, which contains the main ſubject-matter of this diſcourſe; here therefore our meditations muſt fix and abide, and truly ſuch is the deliciouſneſs of the ſubject to ſpiritual hearts, that I judge it wholly needleſs to

offer any other motive beſides itſelf to engage your affections. Let us therefore view our chambers, and ſee how well God hath provided for his children in all the diſtreſſes that befal them in this world; it is our Father's voice that calls to us, *Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers.* And the

1. *Chamber* which comes to be opened as a refuge to diſtreſſed believers in a ſtormy day, is that moſt ſecure and ſafe attribute of Divine Power: into this let us firſt enter by ſerious and believing meditation, and ſee how ſafe they are whom God hides under the protection thereof, in the worſt and moſt dangerous days. In opening this attribute, we ſhall conſider it.

1. In its own nature and property.
2. With reſpect to the promiſes.
3. As it is actuated by providence in the behalf of diſtreſſed ſaints.

And then give you a comfortable proſpect of their ſafe and happy condition, who take up their lodgings by faith in this attribute of God.

1. Let us conſider the power of God in itſelf, and we ſhall find it repreſented to us in the ſcriptures, in theſe three lovely properties, *viz.*

1. Omnipotent
2. Supreme } Power.
3. Everlaſting

1. As an omnipotent and all-ſufficient power, which hath no bounds or limits, but the pleaſure and will of God, Dan. iv. 34, 35. "He doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, "and among the inhabitants of the earth, and none can ſtay his "hand, or ſay unto him, What doſt thou?" So Pſalm cxxxv. 6. "Whatſoever the Lord pleaſed that did he, in heaven, and in "earth, in the ſeas, and all deep places." You ſee divine pleaſure is the only rule, according to which Divine Power exerts itſelf in the world; we are not therefore to limit and reſtrain it in our narrow and ſhallow thoughts, and to think in this, or in that, the power of God may help or ſecure us; but to believe that he is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can aſk or think. Thus thoſe worthies, Dan. iii. 17. by faith exalted the power of God above the order and common rule of ſecond cauſes. "Our God whom we ſerve is able to deliver us from "the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine "hand, O king." Their faith reſting itſelf upon the omnipotent power of God, expected deliverance from it in an extraordinary way; it is true, this is no ſtanding rule for our faith ordinarily to work by; nor have we ground to expect ſuch mi-

raculous ſalvations, but yet when extraordinary difficulties preſs us, and the common ways and means of deliverance are ſhut up, we ought by faith to exalt the omnipotency of God, by aſcribing the glory thereof to him, and leave ourſelves to his good pleaſure, without ſtraitening or narrowing his Almighty Power, according to the mould of our poor, low thoughts and apprehenſions of it: for ſo the Lord himſelf directeth our faith in difficult caſes, Iſa. lv. 8, 9. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, "neither are your ways my ways, ſaith the Lord; for as the "heavens are higher than the earth, ſo are my ways higher "than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." He ſpeaks there of his pardoning mercy, which he will not have his people to contract, and limit according to the model and platform of their own deſponding, miſgiving, and unbelieving thoughts; but to exalt and glorify it, according to its unbounded fulneſs; as it is in the thoughts of God, the fountain of that mercy; ſo it ought to be with reſpect to his power, about which his thoughts and ours do vaſtly differ; the power of God as we caſt it in the mould of our thoughts, is as vaſtly different, and diſproportionate from what it is in the thoughts of God the fountain thereof; as the earth is to the heavens, which is but a ſmall inconſiderable point compared with them.

2. The power of God is a ſupreme and ſovereign power, from which all creature-power is derived, and by which it is over-ruled, reſtrained, and limited at his pleaſure. Nebuchadnezzar was a great monarch, he ruled over other kings, yet he held his kingdom from God; it was God that placed not only the crown upon his head, but his head upon his ſhoulders, Dan. ii. 37. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings; for the God of "heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and ſtrength, and "glory." Hence it follows, that no creature can move tongue or hand againſt any of God's people, but by virtue of a commiſſion or permiſſion from their God; albeit they think not ſo. *Knoweſt thou not*, ſaith Pilate unto Chriſt, *that I have power to crucify thee, and power to releaſe thee?* Proud worm! what an ignorant, and inſolent boaſt was this of his own power! and how doth Chriſt ſpoil and ſhame it in his anſwer? John xix. 10. *Thou couldeſt have no power at all againſt me, except it were given thee from above.*

Wicked men like wild horſes would run over and trample under foot all the people of God in the world, were it not that the bridle of divine Providence had a ſtrong curb to reſtrain them: Ezek. xxii. 6. "The princes of Iſrael every one

" were in thee, to their power to ſhed blood." And it was well for God's Iſrael that their power was not as large as their wills were; this world is a raging and boiſterous ſea, which ſorely toſſes the paſſengers for heaven that ſail upon it, but this is their comfort and ſecurity: " The Lord ſtilleth the noiſe of " the ſea, the noiſe of the waves, and the tumult of the peo- " ple," Pſal. lxv. 7. Moral, as well as natural waves, are checked and bounded by divine power. " Surely the wrath of " man ſhall praiſe thee, and the remainder of wrath thou ſhalt " reſtrain," Pſal. lxxvi. 10. As a man turns ſo much water into the channel as will drive the mill, and turns away the reſt into another ſluice.

Yea, not only the power of man, but the power of devils alſo is under the reſtraint and limitation of this power, Rev. iii. 10. " Satan ſhall caſt ſome of you into priſon, and ye ſhall " have tribulation ten days." He would have caſt them into their graves, yea, into hell if he could, but it muſt be only into a priſon: He would have kept them in priſon, till they had died and rotted there, but it muſt be only for ten days. Oh glorious ſovereign power! which thus keeps the reins of government in its own hand!

3. The power of God is an everlaſting power; time doth not weaken or diminiſh it, as it doth all creature-powers, Iſa. xl. 28. " The Lord, the creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not " neither is weary." Iſa. lix. 1. " The Lord's hand is not " ſhortened," (*i. e.*) He hath as much power now as ever he had, and can do for his people as much as ever he did; time will decay the power of the ſtrongeſt creature, and make him faint and feeble; but the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not. " Thou (ſaith the Pſalmiſt) abideth for ever, thy years flee not," Pſal. cii. 27. In God's working there is no expence of his ſtrength, he is able to do as much for his church now, as ever he did, to act over-again all the glorious deliverances that ever he wrought for his people from the beginning of the world; to do as much for his church now, as he did at the Red-ſea; and upon this ground the church builds its plea, Iſa. li. 9, 10. " Awake, " awake, put on ſtrength, O arm of the Lord, awake as in the " ancient days, as in the generations of old, art thou not it " that haſt cut Rahab, and wounded the dragon?" *q. d.* Lord, why ſhould not thy people at this day expect as glorious productions of thy power, as any of them found in former ages?

Sect. II. Let us view the power of God in the vaſt extent of its operations, and then you will find it working beyond the line,

1. Of creature-power,
2. Of creature-expectation,
3. Of human probability.

1. Beyond the line of all created power, even upon the hearts, thoughts, and minds of men, where no creature hath any jurisdiction. So Gen. xxxi. 29. God bound up the spirit of Laban, and becalmed it towards Jacob. So Psal. cvi. 46. "He made them also to be pitied of all them that carried them "captives." Thus the Lord promised Jeremy, Jer. xv. 11. "I will cause the enemies to entreat thee well, in the time of "evil." This power of God softens the hearts of the most fierce and cruel enemies, and sweetens the spirits of the most bitter and enraged foes of his people.

2. Beyond the line of all creature-expectations, Eph. iii. 20. "God is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we can "ask or think." He doth so in spirituals; as appears by those two famous parables, Luke xv. 19, 22. "And am no more worthy "to be called thy son; make me as one of thy hired servants. "But the Father said to his servants, bring forth the best robe, "and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on "his feet." The prodigal desired to be but as an hired servant, and lo, the fatted calf is killed for him, and music to his meat; and the gold ring upon his finger. And in Mat. xviii. 26, 27. the debtor did but desire patience, and the creditor forgave the debt. Oh; thinks a poor humbled sinner, if I might have but the least glimpse of hope, how sweet would it be! But God brings him to more than he expects, even the clear shining of assurance. It is so in temporals the church confesses the Lord *did things they looked not for*, Isa. lxiv. 3. And in both spirituals and temporals this power moves in an higher orb than our thoughts, Isa. lv. 8, 9. "My thoughts are not your thoughts, "nor my ways your ways; but as far as the heavens are above "the earth, so are my thoughts above your thoughts." The earth is but a punctum to the heavens; all its tallest cedars, mountains, and pyramids cannot reach it: He speaks, as was said before, of God's pitying, pardoning, and merciful thoughts, and shews that no creature can think of God, as he doth of the creature under sin, or under misery, our thoughts are not his thoughts; either first by way of simple cogitation we cannot think such thoughts towards others in misery, by way of pity; or under sin against us by way of pardon, as God doth: Nor secondly, are our thoughts as God's in respect of reflexive comprehension; *i. e.* We cannot conceive or comprehend what those thoughts of God towards us are; when we fall into sin or

miſery, juſt as he thinks them, they are altered, debaſed, and ſtraitened as ſoon as ever they come into our thoughts. See an excellent inſtance in Gen. xlviii. 11. "I had not thought to ſee "thy face, and lo, God hath ſhewed me alſo thy ſeed." A ſurprizing providence; and thus the divine power works in a ſphere above all the thoughts, prayers, and expectations of men.

3. It works beyond all probabilities, and rational conjectures of men; this Almighty power hath created deliverances for the people of God, when things have been brought to the loweſt ebb, and all the means of ſalvation have been hid from their eyes. We have divers famous inſtances of this in ſcripture, wherein we may obſerve a remarkable gradation in the working of this Almighty power: 'Tis ſaid, in 2 Kings xv. 26, 27. "The Lord ſaw the affliction of Iſrael, that it was very "bitter, for there was not any ſhut up, or any left, nor any "helper for Iſrael." A deplorable ſtate! How inevitable was their ruin to the eye of ſenſe? Well might it be called a bitter affliction; yet from this immediate power aroſe for them a ſweet and unexpected ſalvation: And, if we look into 2 Cor. i. 9, 10. we ſhall find the apoſtles and choiceſt Chriſtians of thoſe times, giving up themſelves as loſt men; all ways of eſcaping being quite out of ſight, for ſo much thoſe words ſignify, *We had the ſentence of death in ourſelves; i. e.* We yielded ourſelves for dead men. But though they were ſentenced to death, yea, though they ſentenced themſelves, this power, which wrought above all their thoughts, and rational conjectures, reprived them. And yet one ſtep farther, in Ezek. xxxvii. 4, 5, 6, 7. The people of God are there repreſented as actually dead, yea, as in their graves, yea, as rotted in their graves, and their very bones dry, like thoſe that are dead of old; ſo utterly improbable was their recovery: Yet by the working of this Almighty power, which ſubdueth all things to itſelf, their graves in Babylon were opened, the breath of life came into them, bone came to bone, and there ſtood up a very great army; it was the working of his power above the thoughts of man's heart, which gave the ground of that famous proverb, Gen. xxii. 14. "In the mount of the Lord it "ſhall be ſeen." And the ground of that famous promiſe, Zech. xiv. 7. "At evening time it ſhall be light;" *i. e.* Light ſhall unexpectedly ſpring up, when all men according to the courſe and order of nature, expect nothing but increaſing darkneſs. How extenſive is the power of God in its glorious operations!

Sect. III. Let us view the power of God in its relation to

the promiſes, for ſo it becomes our ſanctuary in the day of trouble; if the power of God be the chamber, it is the promiſe of God which is that golden key that opens it. And if we will conſult the ſcriptures in this matter, we ſhall find the Almighty power of God made over to his people by promiſe, for many excellent ends and uſes in the day of their trouble. As,

1. To uphold and ſupport them, when their own ſtrength fails, Iſa. xli. 10. "Fear thou not, for I am with thee, be not "diſmayed, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee, yea, I "will help thee, yea, I will uphold thee, with the right-hand "of my righteouſneſs." And which of the ſaints have not ſenſibly felt theſe everlaſting arms underneath their ſpirits, when afflictions have preſſed them above their own ſtrength! So runs the promiſe to Paul in 2 Cor. xii. 9. "My grace is "ſufficient for thee, for my ſtrength is made perfect in weak-"neſs;" *i. e.* It is made known in thy weakneſs. Our weakneſs adds nothing to God's power, it doth not make his power perfect, but it hath the better advantage of its diſcovery, and puts forth itſelf more ſignally and conſpicuouſly in our weakneſs; as the ſtars which never ſhine ſo glorioufly, as in the darkeſt night.

2. To preſerve them in all their dangers, to which they lie expoſed in ſoul and body, 1 Pet. i. 5. "You are kept (ſaith the "apoſtle) by the mighty power of God." Kept as in a garriſon; this is their arm every morning, as it is Iſa. xxxiii. 2. "O "Lord be gracious unto us, we have waited for thee, be thou "their arm every morning, our ſalvation alſo in the time of "trouble." The arm is that member which is fitted for the defence of the body, and for that end ſo placed by the God of nature, that it may guard every part above and below it; but as good they were bound behind our backs, for any help they can give us in ſome caſes: It is God's arm that defends us and not our own. This inviſible power of God makes the ſaints the world's wonder. Pſal. lxxi. 7. "I am as a wonder to many, but "thou art my ſtrong refuge." To ſee the poor defenceleſs creatures preſerved in the midſt of furious enemies, that is juſt matter of wonder; but God being their inviſible refuge that ſolves the wonder; to this end the power of God is by promiſe engaged to his people, Iſa. xxvii. 3. "I the Lord do keep it, I "will water it every moment, leſt any hurt it, I will keep it, "night and day." And thus they ſubſiſt in the midſt of dangers and troubles; as the burning buſh (the emblem of the church) did amidſt the devouring flames, Exod. iii. 3.

3. To deliver them out of their diſtreſſes, ſo runs the pro-

miſe, Pſal. xci. 14, 15. "Becauſe he hath ſet his love upon me, "therefore will I deliver him; I will ſet him on high, becauſe "he hath known my name; he ſhall call upon me, and I will "anſwer him, I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him "and honour him." And Jer. xxx. 7. "Alas for that day is "great, ſo that none is like it: It is even the time of Jacob's "trouble, but ye ſhall be ſaved out of it." And ſurely there can be no diſtreſs ſo great, no caſe of believers ſo forlon; but,

1. It is eaſy with God to ſave them out of it. Are they to the eye of ſenſe loſt, as hopeleſs as men in the grave? Yet ſee Ezek. xxxvii. 12. "O my people, I will open your graves, and "cauſe you to come out of your graves, and bring you into the "land of Iſrael." And he doth whatever he doth eaſily, with a word, Pſal. xliv. 4. "Thou art my king, O God, command "deliverances for Jacob." And it requireth no more violent motion to do it, than he that ſwimmeth in the water uſes, Iſa. xxv. 11. A gentle eaſy motion of the hand doth it.

2. And as the power of God can deliver them eaſily, ſo ſpeedily. Their deliverance is often wrought by way of ſurprizal. Iſa. xvii. 14. "Behold, at evening-tide trouble, and in the "morning he is not." So the church prays, in Pſal. cxxxvi. 14. "Turn again our captivity, as the ſtreams in the ſouth." The ſouthern countries are dry, the ſtreams there come not in a gentle and ſlow current, but being occaſioned by violent ſudden ſpouts of rain, they preſently overflow the country, and as ſoon retire: So ſpeedily can the power of God free his people from their dangers and fears.

3. Yea, ſuch is the excellency of his delivering power, that he can ſave alone, without any contribution of creature-aids. So Iſa. lix. 16. "He wondered that there was no interceſſor; there- "fore his hand brought ſalvation unto him, and his righteouſ- "neſs ſuſtained him." We read indeed Judg. v. 23. of helping the Lord, but that is not to expreſs his need, but their duty; we have continual need of God, but he hath no need of us: he uſes inſtruments, but not out of neceſſity, his arm alone can ſave us, be the danger never ſo great, or the viſible means of deliverance never ſo remote.

4. Once more let us view this chamber of divine power, as it is continually opened by the hand of providence, to receive and ſecure the people of God in all their dangers. It is ſaid, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout "the whole earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in the behalf of them "whoſe heart is perfect towards him." Where you have an excellent account of the immediacy, univerſality, and efficacy of

Divine Providence, as it uſes and applies this Divine power for the guard and defence of that people, who are its charge; he doth not only ſet angels to watch for them, but his own eyes guard them, even thoſe ſeven eyes of providence mentioned, Zech. iii. 9. which *never ſleep nor ſlumber*; for they are ſaid to run continually to and fro, and that not in this or that particular place only, for the ſervice of ſome more eminent and excellent perſons; but through the whole earth. It is an encompaſſing and ſurrounding providence which hath its eye upon all whoſe hearts are upright; all the ſaints are within the line of its care and protection; the eye of providence diſcovereth all their dangers, and its arm defends them, for he ſhews himſelf ſtrong in their behalf.

The ſecret, but the almighty efficacy of providence is alſo excellently deſcribed to us in Ezek. i. 8. where the angels are ſaid to have their hands under their wings, working ſecretly and undiſcernibly, but very effectually for the ſaints committed to their charge. Like unto which is that in Hab. iii. 4. where it is ſaid of God, that "he had horns coming out of his hands, and there "was the hiding of his power." The hand is the inſtrument of action, denoting God's active power, and the horns coming out of them are the glorious rays and beams of that power ſhining forth in the ſalvation of his people. O that we could ſun ourſelves in thoſe clearful and reviving beams of divine power, by conſidering how glorioufly they have broken forth, and ſhone out for the ſalvation of his people in all ages. So it did for Iſrael at the red-ſea, Exod. xv. 6. So for Johoſhaphat in that great ſtrait, 2 Chron. xx. 12, 15. And ſo in the time of Hezekiah, 2 Kings xix. 3, 7. Yea, in all ages from the beginning of the world the ſaints have been ſheltered under theſe wings of Divine power, Iſa. li. 9, 10. Thus providence hath hanged and adorned this chamber of Divine Power with the delightful hiſtories of the church's manifold preſervations by it.

Section IV. Having taken a ſhort view of this glorious chamber of God's power, abſolutely in itſelf, and alſo in relation to his promiſes and providences, it remains now, that I preſs and perſuade all the people of God, under their fears and dangers, according to God's gracious invitation, to enter into it, ſhut their doors, and to behold with delight this glorious attribute working for them in all their exigencies and diſtreſſes.

1. Enter into this chamber of divine power, all ye that fear the Lord, and hide yourſelves there in thoſe dangerous and diſtreſsful days; let me ſay to you as the prophet did to the poor

diſtreſſed Jews, Zech. ix. 12. "Turn ye to your ſtrong hold, ye "priſoners of hope." Strong holds might they ſay; why, where are they? The walls of Jeruſalem are in the duſt, the temple burnt with fire, Sion an heap, what meaneſt thou in telling us of our ſtrong holds? Why, admit all this, yet there is *ſatis praeſidii in uno Deo*, refuge enough for you in God alone, as Calvin excellently notes upon that place. Chriſtian, art not thou able to fetch a good ſubſiſtence for thy ſoul by faith, out of the almighty power of God? The renowned ſaints of old did ſo. Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob met with as many difficulties and plunges of trouble in their time, as ever you did, or ſhall meet with; yet, by the exerciſe of their faith upon this attribute, they lived comfortably, and why cannot you? Exod. vi. 3. "I appeared (ſaith God) unto Abraham, Iſaac, and Ja-"cob, by the name of God Almighty." They kept houſe, and feaſted by faith upon this name of mine; O that we could do as Abraham did, Rom. iv. 21. We have the ſame attribute, but, alas, we have not ſuch a faith as his was, to improve it. It is eaſy to believe the almighty power of God in a calm, but not ſo eaſy to reſign ourſelves to it, and ſecurely reſt upon it in a ſtorm of adverſity; but oh what peace and reſt would our faith procure us by the free uſe and exerciſe of it this way! to aſſiſt your faith in this difficulty wherein we find the faith of a Moſes ſometimes ſtaggered, let me briefly offer you theſe four following encouragements.

1. Conſider how your gracious God hath engaged this his almighty power, by promiſe and covenant for the ſecurity of his people. God pawned it, as it were, to Abraham, in that famous promiſe, Gen. xvii. 1. "I am the almighty God, walk "thou before me, and be thou perfect." And Gen. xv. 1. "Fear "not, Abraham, I am thy ſhield." Say not, this was Abraham's peculiar privilege, for if thou conſult Hoſ. xii. 4. and Heb. xiii. 5, 6. you will find that believers in theſe days have as good a title to the promiſes made in thoſe days, as thoſe worthies had to whom they were immediately made.

2. If you be believers, your relation to God ſtrongly engageth his power for you, as well as his own promiſes, "Surely, "(ſaith God) they are my people, children that will not lie; ſo "he became their Saviour," Iſa. lxiii. 8. We ſay relations have the leaſt of entity, but the greateſt efficacy; you find it ſo in your own experience, let a wife, child, or friend be in imminent danger, and it ſhall engage all the power you have to ſuccour and deliver them.

3. This glorious power of God is engaged for you by the

very malice and wickedneſs of your enemies, who will be apt to impute the ruin of the ſaints, to the defect of power in God; from whence thoſe excellent arguments are drawn, Num. xiv. 15, 16. "Now if thou ſhalt kill all this people as one man, "then the nations which have heard the fame of thee, will ſpeak, "ſaying, Becauſe the Lord was not able to bring this people into "the land which he ſware unto them, therefore he hath ſlain "them in the wilderneſs." And again, Deut. xxxii. 26, 27. you will find the Lord improving this argument for them himſelf; if they do not plead it for themſelves, he will. "I would ſcatter "them into corners, I would make the remembrance of them "to ceaſe from among men, were it not that I feared the wrath "of the enemy, leſt their adverſaries ſhould behave themſelves ſtrangely, and leſt they ſhould ſay, Our hand is high, "and the Lord hath not done all this." O ſee how much you are beholden to the very rage of your enemies, for your deliverances from them!

4. To conclude, the very reliance of your ſouls by faith upon the power of God, your very leaning upon his arm engages it for your protection, Iſa. xxvi. 3. "Thou wilt keep him in "perfect peace, whoſe mind is ſtayed on thee, becauſe he truſteth in thee." Puzzle not yourſelves therefore any longer about qualifications; but know that the very acting of your faith on God, the recumbency of your ſouls upon him, is that which will engage him for your defence, how weak and defective ſoever thou art in other reſpects.

2. Having thus entered by faith into this chamber of divine power, the next counſel the text gives you, is, to ſhut the door behind you, *i. e.* after the acting of your faith, and the quiet repoſe of your ſouls upon God's almighty power; then take heed leſt unbelieving fears and jealouſies creep in again, and diſturb the reſt of your ſouls in God; you find a ſad inſtance of this in Moſes, Numb. xi. 21, 23. After ſo many glorious acts and triumphs of his faith, how were his heels tripped up by diffidence which crept in afterwards! Good men may be poſed with difficult providences, and made to ſtagger. The Iſraelites had lived upon miracles many years, yet Pſal. lxxviii. 20. "Can he give bread alſo?" Good Martha objects difficulty to Chriſt, John xi. 39. "By this time he ſtinketh." Oh! it is a glorious thing to give God the glory of his almighty power in difficult caſes that we cannot comprehend. See Zech. viii. 6. "If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in theſe days, ſhould it be as mar-

" vellous in mine eyes?' ſaith the Lord of hoſts." Difficulties are for men, but not for God: becauſe it is marvellous in your eyes, muſt it be ſo in God's! Various objections will be apt to ariſe in your hearts to drive you out of this your refuge. As,

Object. 1. Oh! but the long continuance of our troubles and diſtreſſes will ſink our very hearts, Iſa. xl. 27. " Why ſayeſt " thou, O Jacob, and ſpeakeſt, O Iſrael, my way is hid from " the Lord, and my judgment is paſſed over from my God."

Sol. But, oh! wait upon God without fainting, Heb. ii. 3. " The viſion is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it " ſhall ſpeak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe " it will ſurely come, it will not tarry."

Object. 2. Oh, but our former hopes and expectations of deliverance are fruſtrated, Jer. viii. 15. " We looked for peace, " but no good came: and for a time of health, and behold " trouble."

Sol. Oh, but yet be not diſcouraged: ſee how the Pſalmiſt begins the lxixth pſalm with trembling, and ends it with triumph; the huſbandman waiteth, and ſo muſt you.

Object. 3. But there is no ſign or appearance of our deliverance.

Sol. What then, this is no new thing, Pſal. lxxiv. 9. " We " ſee not our ſigns, there is no more any prophet, neither is " there any among us that knoweth how long."

Object. 4. But all things work contrary to our hope.

Sol. Why, ſo did things with Abraham; yet ſee, Rom. iv. 18. " Againſt hope, he believed in hope."

3. Obſerve further with delight, the outgoings and glorious workings of divine Power for you, and for the church in times of trouble; this is ſweet entertainment for your ſouls, it is food for faith, Pſal. lxxiv. 14. " Thou brakeſt the heads of Leviathan " in pieces, and gaveſt him to be meat to the people inhabit- " ing the wilderneſs." And here I beſeech you behold and admire,

1. Its myſterious and admirable protection of the ſaints in all their dangers. They feed as ſheep in the midſt of wolves, Luke x. 3. They lie among them that are ſet on fire, Pſal. lvii. 4. " Their habitation is in the midſt of deceit," Jer. ix. 6. Yet they are kept in ſafety by the mighty power of God.

2. Behold and admire it in caſting the bonds of reſtraint upon your enemies, that though they would, yet they cannot hurt you; our dangers are viſible, and our fears great, but our ſecurity and ſafety admirable, Iſa. li. 13. " Thou haſt feared con-

"tinually every day, becauſe of the fury of the oppreſſor, as "if he were ready to deſtroy; and where is the fury of the "oppreſſor?"

3. Behold its opening unexpected and unlikely refuges and ſecurities for the ſaints, in their diſtreſſes; Iſa. xvi. 4. "Let "mine outcaſts dwell with thee, Moab, be thou a covert to "them from the face of the ſpoiler; for the extortioner is at an "end, the ſpoiler ceaſeth, the oppreſſors are conſumed out of "the land." Rev. xii. 16. "The earth helped the woman, "and the earth opened her mouth, and ſwallowed up the flood "which the dragon caſt out of his mouth."

4. Behold it fruſtrating all the deſigns of our enemies againſt us, Iſa. liv. 17. "No weapon that is formed againſt thee ſhall "proſper, and every tongue that ſhall riſe againſt thee in judg-"ment thou ſhalt condemn. Behold, I have created the ſmith," Iſa. liv. 16. *q. d.* He that created the ſmith, can order, as he pleaſeth, the weapon made by him; hence our enemies are not maſters of their own deſigns.

Oh then depend upon this power of God, for it is your ſecurity; there is a twofold dependence, the one natural and neceſſary, the other elective.

1. Natural dependence, ſo all do, and muſt depend upon him.

2. Elective and voluntary, and ſo we all ought to depend upon him; and for your encouragement take this ſcripture, Pſal. ix. 9, 10. "The Lord alſo will be a refuge for the oppreſſed, "a refuge in times of trouble, and they that know thy name "will put their truſt in thee, for thou, Lord, haſt not forſaken "them that ſeek thee." And thus of the firſt attribute of God, prepared for the ſafety of his people in times of trouble.

CHAP. VII.

Opening that glorious attribute of Divine Wiſdom, as a ſecond chamber of ſecurity to the ſaints in difficult times.

Sect. I. THE next chamber of divine protection, into which I ſhall lead you, is the *infinite wiſdom of God*; I call it the next, becauſe I ſo find it placed in ſcripture, Job xxxvi. 5. "He is mighty in power and wiſdom." Dan. ii. 20. "Wiſdom and might are his."

This attribute may be fitly called the *council-chamber* of

heaven, where all things are contrived in the deepeſt wiſdom, which are afterwards wrought in the world by power, Eph. i. 11. "He worketh all things after the counſel of his own will." Counſel in the creature, implies weakneſs and defect; we are not able at one thought to fathom the depth of a buſineſs, and therefore muſt deliberate and ſpend many thoughts about it, and when we have ſpent all our own thoughts, we are oft-times at a loſs, and muſt borrow help, and ask counſel of others; but in God it notes the perfection of his underſtanding, for as thoſe acts of the creature which are the reſults of deliberation and counſel, are the height and top of all rational contrivement; ſo in its accommodation to God, it notes the excellent reſults of his infinite and moſt perfect underſtanding.

Now this wiſdom of God is to be conſidered either as abſolute, or relatively.

1. Abſolutely in itſelf, and ſo it is, *That whereby he moſt perfectly and exactly knows himſelf, and all things without himſelf, ordering and diſpoſing them, in the moſt convenient manner, to the glory of his own name.*

Wiſdom comprehends two things, 1. Knowledge of the nature of things, which, in the creature, is called *ſcience.* 2. Knowledge how to govern, order and diſpoſe them, which, in the creature, is called *prudence*; theſe things in a man are but faint ſhadows of that which is in God, in the moſt abſolute perfection; he fully knows himſelf, for his underſtanding is infinite, Pſal. cxlvii. 5. and the thoughts he thinks towards us, Jer. xxix. 11. And as he perfectly underſtands himſelf, ſo likewiſe all things that are without himſelf, Acts xv. 18. "Known "unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." Together with all the ſecret deſigns, thoughts, and purpoſes which lie hid from all others, in the inmoſt receſſes of mens hearts, Pſal. cxxxix. 2.

And as he perfectly knows all things, ſo he fully underſtands how to govern and direct them to the beſt end, even the exalting of his own praiſe, Pſal. civ. 24. Rom. xi. 36. "For of him, "and through him, and to him are all things:" of him, as the efficient cauſe; through him, as the conſerving cauſe: and to him, as the final cauſe. And in this wiſe diſpoſition of all things, he hath a gracious reſpect to the good of his choſen, Rom. viii. 28. "All things ſhall work together for good to "them that love God." More particularly, the wiſdom of God is to be conſidered by us, in its excellent properties, amongſt which, theſe four following are eminently conſpicuous, as it is the

1. Original, 3. Perfect, and
2. Eſſential, 4. Only wiſdom.

1. The wiſdom of God is the original wiſdom, from which all the wiſdom found in angels or men is derived, and into that fountain we are directed to go, for ſupplies of wiſdom, James i. 5. "If any man lack wiſdom, let him ask it of God." There is indeed a ſpirit in man, but it is the inſpiration of the Almighty that giveth underſtanding, Job xxxii. 8. The natural faculty is ours, but the illumination thereof is God's, the underſtanding of the creature is the dial, which ſignifies nothing till the ſun ſhine upon it.

2. God's wiſdom is eſſential wiſdom. Wiſdom in the creature is but a quality ſeparable from the ſubject; but in God it is his nature, his very eſſence, he can as ſoon ceaſe to be God, as to be moſt wiſe.

3. The wiſdom of God is perfect wiſdom, full of itſelf, and excluſive of its contrary; the wiſeſt of men are not wiſe at all times; the greateſt wits are not without ſome mixture of madneſs; it is an high attainment in human wiſdom to underſtand our own weakneſs and folly; the deepeſt heads are but ſhallows, but the wiſdom of God is an unſearchable depth, Rom. xi. 33. "O the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and "knowledge of God! how unſearchable are his judgments, "and his ways paſt finding out!"

4. To conclude, the wiſdom of God is the only wiſdom; there is no wiſdom without him, none againſt him, he is the only wiſe God, Jude verſe 25.

2. The wiſdom of God muſt be conſidered relatively, and that in a double reſpect:

1. To his promiſes. 2. To his providences.

Sect. II. Let us view it in its relation to the promiſes, where you ſhall find it made over by God to his people, for divers excellent uſes and purpoſes in times of diſtreſs and danger. As,

1. It was made over to them in promiſes, for their direction and guidance when they knew not what to do, or which way to take. So Pſal. xxv. 9. "The meek will he guide in judgment, "and the meek will he teach his way;" and Iſa. lviii. 11. "The "Lord ſhall guide thee continually;" and Pſal. xxxiii. 8. "I will guide thee with mine eye." And with this the Pſalmiſt encourages himſelf, Pſal. lxxiii. 24. "Thou ſhalt guide "me with thy counſel, and afterwards receive me to glory." O what an invaluable mercy is this! we ſhould make ſhipwreck both of our temporal and eternal mercies quickly, were it not for the guidance of divine wiſdom.

2. To extricate them when involved in difficulties. So 2 Pet. ii. 9. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation." They know not how, but their God doth; they are often at a loss, but he is never. So 1 Cor. x. 13. "There hath no temptation taken you, but such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

3. To over-rule and order all their troubles to their good and real advantage. So runs that most comprehensive promise, Rom. viii. 28. "All things shall work together for good to them that love God." In the faith whereof Paul concludes, Phil. i. 19. Even this shall work for his salvation. Thus the people of God were sent into captivity for their good, Jer. xxiv. 8. and Joseph into Egypt, Gen. l. 20. "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."

2. Let us view the wisdom of God, in its relation to his providences, for there it shines forth eminently, Ezek. i. 18. The wheels were full of eyes, *i. e.* the motions and providential revolutions in this lower world are very judicious and advised motions; *Non caeco impetu volvuntur rotae;* it hath an end and design which no man understands till it open itself in the event.

The enemies of the church are oft-times men of the finest brains, and deepest policies: Herod a fox for subtilty, Luke xiii. 32. Julian and Ahitophel, with many others, who have digged as deep as hell in their counsels, and laid their designs so sure, that they doubted not to be masters of it; yet their hands could not perform their enterprize.

The wisdom of providence hath still befooled them, and baffled the cunningest head-pieces that ever undertook any design against the church, as fast as ever they arose; and here the wisdom of providence is remarkable in three things especially.

1. In revealing and discovering the secret conspiracies and counsels of the church's enemies, and thereby frustrating their designs, Gen. xxvii. 41, 42. Providence (as one calls it) is the bird of the air, that carries tidings, and whistles deeds of darkness; Job. xii. 22. "He discovereth deep things out of darkness, and bringeth out to light the shadow of death." And this God hath done both immediately and mediately. 1. Immediately, 2 Kings vi. 11. What counsel soever the king of Syria took in his bed-chamber was still discovered by the word to the prophet.

So true is that, Job xxxiv. 22. "There is no darkneſs nor ſha-"dow of death where the workers of iniquity may hide them-"ſelves." Thus the deſign of Herod is revealed to Joſeph in a dream.

But commonly he doth it by means; as,

1. By giving knowledge of it to ſome that are under obligations of duty or affection to reveal it to thoſe that are concerned in the danger. So Paul's ſiſter's ſon, Acts xxiii. 16. revealed the conſpiracy againſt his life, and ſo the plot miſcarried by revealing it before it was ripe for execution.

2. By the failure of ſome circumſtance, the whole is brought to light; there be many fine threads upon which the deſigns of politicians hang; if one break, the whole deſign is unravelled. Thus the wiſdom of God ſometimes prevents his people's ruin, by taking away the ſpeech of the truſty from him, and making their own tongues to fall upon themſelves.

3. By their own confeſſion, ſo Pſal. lxiv. 5, 6, 7, 8. where you have the plot laid, ver. 5. "They encourage themſelves in an "evil matter, they commune of laying ſnares privily, they ſay, "who ſhall ſee them?" The deep contrivance of it, ver. 6. "They ſearch out iniquity, they accompliſh a diligent ſearch, "both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart "is deep." Their plot deſtroyed, ver. 7. "But God ſhall ſhoot "at them with an arrow, ſuddenly ſhall they be wounded." The method or way of providence in deſtroying it, ver. 8. "So "they ſhall make their own tongue to fall upon themſelves, all "that ſee them ſhall fly away." Thus hath the wiſdom of our God wrought for us this day, beyond all the thoughts of our hearts; and oh that it might make ſuch impreſſions upon all our hearts, as follow in ver. 9, 10. "All men ſhall fear, and ſhall "declare the work of God, for they ſhall wiſely conſider his doing. "The righteous ſhall be glad in the Lord, and ſhall truſt in "him, and all the upright in heart ſhall glory."

2. The wiſdom of God diſcovers itſelf in behalf of that people who are his own, in diverting the danger from them, and putting by the deadly thruſts their enemies make at them; thus it ſpoils their game by an unforeſeen rub in the green, and that eſpecially three ways.

1. By making their counſels to jar among themſelves, in which jars is the ſweeteſt harmony of providence; thus the counſel of Ahitophel jars with the counſel of Huſhai, 2 Sam. xvii. 5, 7. by which means David eſcaped: The Phariſees claſhed with the Sadducees, Acts xxiii. 7. and by that means Paul eſcaped.

2. By cutting out other work, and ſtarting ſome new deſign, which puts them, as a freſh ſcent does the dog, to a loſs. Thus the people of God in Jeruſalem were delivered by a diverſion, 2 Kings xix. 7. "Behold, I will ſend a blaſt upon him, and he "ſhall hear a rumour and ſhall return to his own land, and I "will cauſe him to fall by the ſword in his own land, ſo Rab-"ſhakeh returned." By this means alſo was David delivered from the hand of Saul, 1 Sam. xxiii. 27. And in this method of providence, that ſcripture is often fulfilled, Prov. xxi. 18. "The wicked ſhall be a ranſom for the righteous, and the "tranſgreſſor for the upright."

3. By cutting off the capital enemies of his church, by whoſe ſeaſonable deſtruction they are delivered. Thus fell Julian, that bitter enemy of the Chriſtians, when he was preparing to put his laſt and moſt bloody deſign againſt them in execution. And thus fell Haman, Nero, and many more in the very height and heat of their deſigns againſt the church.

3. The wiſdom of God glorioufly diſplays itſelf in cauſing the deſigns of the wicked, like a ſurcharged gun, to recoil upon, and deſtroy themſelves: it often falls out with the undermining enemies of the church, as it ſometimes doth with them that dig deep mines in the earth, who are deſtroyed and buried in their own work; Pſal. ix. 15, 16. "The Heathen are ſunk down in "the pit that they made, in the net which they hid is their own "feet taken. The Lord is known by the judgments which he "executeth, the wicked is ſnared in the work of his own hands. "Higgajon, Selah." There is a double mercy in this providence, one in delivering the ſaints from the danger, the other in cauſing it to fall upon the contrivers, and is therefore celebrated with a double note of attention: in theſe obſervable ſtrokes, the righteouſneſs of God ſhines forth in repaying his people's enemies in their own coin *.

Thus Haman did eat the firſt-fruits of that tree which his own hands planted, and thus Jeruſalem becomes a burdenſome ſtone to all that burden themſelves with it, Zech. xii. 3.

4. Admire and adore the wiſdom of your God in thoſe great and unexpected advantages, which ariſe to you out of thoſe very dangers and deſigns of your enemies that threatned your ruin; the very hands of your very enemies are ſometimes made the in-

* ——*Nec lex eſt juſtior ulla,*
Quam nec is artifices arte perire ſua. OVID.
Nor is there any juſter law, than that contrivers of miſchief periſh by their own art.

ſtruments of your advancement and enlargement; your perſecutions become your privileges, the motto of the palm-tree fitly becomes yours, *Suppreſſa refurgo.*

In three things the wiſdom of God makes advantage out of your troubles.

1. In fortifying your ſouls and bodies with ſuitable ſtrength, when any eminent trial is intended for you; ſo it was with the apoſtles, 2 Cor. i. 5. "As the ſufferings of Chriſt abound in us, "ſo our conſolation by Chriſt." God lays in ſuitably to what men lay on mercileſly: Chriſt would not draw the poor timorous diſciples out of Jeruſalem unto hard encounters, until firſt he had endued them with power from on high, Luke xxiv. 49.

2. The wiſdom of your God can, and often doth make your very troubles and ſufferings, inſtead of ſo many ordinances, to ſtrengthen your faith, and fortify your patience. So the heads of Leviathan became meat to his people inhabiting the wilderneſs, Pſal. lxxiv. 14. And ſo the plots of Balak and Balaam were deſigned by God to be as a ſtanding inſtructing ordinance for the encouragement of his people's faith in future difficulties, Mic. vi. 5. "O my people, remember now what "Balak king of Moab conſulted, and what Balaam the ſon of "Beor anſwered him from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may "know the righteouſneſs of the Lord." *q. d.* You cannot but remember how thoſe your enemies courted me with multitudes of offerings to deliver you up into their hands, and how faithfully I ſtood by you in all thoſe dangers; that plot diſcovered at once the policy of your enemies, and the righteouſneſs of your God.

3. His wiſdom is diſcovered to your advantage, in permitting your dangers to grow to an extremity, on purpoſe to magnify his goodneſs, and increaſe your comfort in your deliverance from it. Pſal. cxxvi. 1. "When the Lord turned our capti-"vity, we were as them that dreamed." Proportionable to the greatneſs of your dangers will your joys be.

Section III. Well then, if the wiſdom of God ſhines forth ſo gloriouſly in the times of his peoples trouble; be perſuaded by faith to enter into this chamber alſo; it is a chamber where a believing ſoul may enjoy the ſweeteſt reſt and quietneſs in the moſt hurrying and diſtracting times; ſhut the door behind you, and improve this attribute to your beſt advantage.

1. Enter into this chamber by faith, believe firmly that the management of all the affairs of this world, whether public or perſonal, is in the hands of your all-wiſe God; more particularly, exerciſe your faith about the wiſdom of God in theſe things.

1. Believe that the wiſdom of God can contrive and order the way of your eſcape and deliverance, when all doors of hope are ſhut up to ſenſe and reaſon; we know not what to do, ſaid good Jehoſhaphat, but our eyes are unto thee; *q. d.* Lord, though I am at a loſs, and ſee no way to eſcape, thou art never at a loſs. The Lord (ſaith Peter) knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation: Divine wiſdom hath infinite methods and ways of deliverance unknown to man, till they are opened in the event.

2. Believe that the wiſdom of God can turn your greateſt troubles and fears, into the choiceſt bleſſings and mercies to you: I know (ſaith Paul) that this ſhall turn to my ſalvation, Phil. i. 19, meaning his bonds and ſufferings for Chriſt. Divine wiſdom can give you honey out of the carcaſs of the lion, cauſe you to part with thoſe afflictions, admiring and bleſſing God for them, which you meet with fear and trembling, as ſuſpecting your deſtruction was imported in them.

3. In conſideration of both theſe, reſign up yourſelves to the wiſdom of God, and lean not to your own underſtandings; "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be "eſtabliſhed," Prov. xvi. 3. When Melancthon was oppreſſed with cares and doubts about the diſtracting affairs of the church in his time, Luther thus chides him out of his deſpondency, *Deſinat Philippus eſſe rector mundi*, do not thou preſume to be the governor of the world; but leave the reins of government in his hand that made it, and beſt knows how to rule it: let God alone to chuſe thy lot and portion, to order thy condition, and manage all thy affairs, and let thy ſoul take its reſt in this quiet chamber of Divine wiſdom. But then,

2. Be ſure to ſhut thy door behind thee, and beware, leſt unbelief, anxieties, fears, and doubts, creep in after thee to diſturb thy reſt, and ſhake thy faith in this point; we are apt, in two caſes, to be ſtumbled in this matter.

1. When ſubtle and cunning enemies are engaged againſt us; this was David's caſe, 2 Sam. xv. 31. "One told David, ſay-"ing, Ahitophel is among the conſpirators with Abſalom; and "David ſaid, O Lord, I pray thee, turn the counſel of Ahi-"tophel into fooliſhneſs." When he heard Ahitophel was with the conſpirators, it greatly puzzled him. Though a whole conclave of politicians be againſt us, yet if God be with us, let us not fear.

2. When our own reaſon intrudes too far, and offers its dictates too boldly in the caſe, we are apt to ſay in the arrogancy of our own reaſon, we cannot be delivered; but oh that we

would learn to reſign it up to the wiſdom of God. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly. When the queſtion was asked the prophet, Ezek. xxxvii. 3. Can theſe dry bones live? he anſwers, Lord thou knoweſt. That is excellent counſel, Prov. iii. 5. "Truſt in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not to "thine own underſtanding."

3. Improve the wiſdom of God for yourſelves in all difficult and diſtreſsful caſes,

1. Beg of God to exerciſe his wiſdom for you, when enemies conſpire againſt you: ſo did David, 2 Sam. xv. 31. "Lord, turn the counſel of Ahitophel into fooliſhneſs!" O it is the nobleſt and ſureſt way to vanquiſh an enemy: it was but asked and done.

2. Comfort yourſelves with this whenever you are at a loſs in your own thoughts, and know not what to do, then commit all to Divine conduct; let God ſteer for you in a ſtorm; he loves to be truſted, Pſal. xxxvii. 5. "Commit thy way unto "the Lord, truſt alſo in him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs."

3. Encourage yourſelves from this when the church is in the greateſt danger, and moſt ſorely ſhaken; O that is a bleſſed promiſe, Zech. iii. 9. "Upon one ſtone ſhall be ſeven eyes." Meaning Chriſt, and the church built on him as the chief corner-ſtone; the ſeven eyes are the ſeven eyes of providence, which are never all aſleep.

CHAP. VIII.

Opening that glorious attribute of divine faithfulneſs, as a third chamber of ſecurity to the people of God, in times of diſtreſs and danger.

Sect. I. HAVING viewed the ſaints refuge in the power and wiſdom of God, we next proceed to a third chamber of ſafety for the ſaints refuge, *viz.* The faithfulneſs of God.

In this attribute is our ſafety and reſt, amidſt the confuſions of the world, and daily diſappointments we are vexed withal, through the vanity and falſeneſs of the creatures: as to creatures, the very beſt of them are but vanity, yea, vanity of vanity, the vaineſt vanity, Eccl. i. 2. "Every man in his beſt e-"ſtate is altogether vanity," Pſal. xxxix. 5. Yea, thoſe that we expect moſt from, give us moſt of trouble, Mic. vii. 5. Neareſt relations bring up the rear of ſorrows, Job vi. 15. "My bre-

" three have dealt deceitfully as a brook." Especially their deceit appears most, when we have most need of their help, Psa. cxlii. 4. How great a mercy is it then to have a refuge in the faithfulness of God as David had; " I looked on my right hand, " and beheld, but there was no man that would know me, re- " fuge failed me, no man cared for my soul." And likewise the church, Mic. vii. 7. " I will look unto the Lord, I will wait " for the God of my salvation, my God will hear me." A time may come, when you shall not know where to trust in all this world. Let me therefore open to you this chamber of rest in the faithfulness of God, against such a day, and this I shall do in a twofold consideration of it, *viz.*

1. Absolutely in its own nature.

2. Relatively in the promises and providences of God.

1. Absolutely, and so the faithfulness of God is his sincerity, firmness, and constancy in performing his word to his people in all times and cases. So Moses describes him to Israel, Deut. vii. 9. " Know therefore, that the Lord thy God he is God, " the faithful God." And Joshua appeals to their experience for the vindication of it, Josh. xxiii. 14. " Ye know in all your " hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed " of all the good which the Lord your God spake con- " cerning you; all are come to pass, and not one thing hath " failed thereof." And it is also fully asserted, Jer. xxxi. 35, 36, 37. and greatly admired even in the darkest day, Lam. iii. 23. *Great is thy faithfulness.* And it is well for us that his faithfulness is great, for great is that weight that leans upon it, even all our hopes for both worlds, for this world, and for that to come, Tit. i. 2. " In hope of eternal life, which God that can- " not lie promised before the world began."

It was a very dishonourable character that * Suidas gave of Tiberius, " That he never made shew of having what he de- " sired to have, nor ever minded to do what he promised to " do:" but God is faithful, and that will appear by these following evidences of it.

Evid. 1. By his exact fulfilling of his promises of the longest date. So, Acts vii. 6. four hundred and thirty years were run out before the promise of Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was accomplished; yet, Acts vii. 17. when the time of the promise was come, God was punctual to a day: Seventy years in Babylon, and at the expiration of that time, they returned,

* *Eorum quae appetebat ne quicquam prae se ferebat, et eorum quae dicebat, ne quicquam facere volebat.* Suidas.

2 Chron. xxxvi. 21. Men may forget, but God cannot, Isa. xlix. 15, 16.

Evid. 2. By making way for his promises through the greatest difficulties, and seeming impossibilities. So to Abraham when old, Gen. xviii. 13, 14. "Is there any thing too hard for "the Lord? At the appointed time will I return unto thee, ac- "cording to the time of life; and Sarah shall have a son." And likewise to the Israelites, Can these dry bones live? Ezek. xxxvii. 3. Difficulties are for men, not God, Gen. xviii. 14. What art thou, O great mountain, Zech. viii. 9. "If it be mar- "vellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people, should it al- "so be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the Lord of hosts."

Evid. 3. By fulfilling promises to his people, when their hopes and expectations have been given up. So Ezek. xxxvii. 11. Our bones are dry, our hope is lost, we are cut off for our part. And Isa. xlix. 14. "Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken "me, and my Lord hath forgotten me." There may be much unbelief in good men, their faith may be sorely staggered, yet God is faithful; men may question his promises, yet God cannot deny himself, 2 Tim. ii. 13.

Evid. 4. By God's appealing to his people, and referring the matter to their own judgment, Micah vi. 3, 4, 5. "O my peo- "ple, what have I done unto thee; and wherein have I wearied "thee? Testify against me, for I brought thee up out of the "land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of ser- "vants, and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. O "my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab con- "sulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from "Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the righteousness of "the Lord;" *q. d.* If I have failed in a punctilio of my pro- mise, shew it: Did not Balak and Balaam court me, and try all ways to win me over to them by multitudes of sacrifices? yet I did not desert you. So Jer. ii. 31. "O generation, see "ye the word of the Lord: Have I been a wilderness unto "Israel, a land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We "are lords, we will come no more unto thee," Isa. xliv. 8.

Evid. 5. The faithfulness of God is abundantly cleared by the constant testimonies given unto it in all ages by them that have tried it, they have all witnessed for God, and attested his unspotted faithfulness to the generations that were to come. So did Joshua, chap. xxiii 14. "All is come to pass;" and so did Daniel, chap. ix 4. "O Lord, the great and dreadful God, "keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him:" with which David's testimony concurs, Psal. cxlvi. 6. "Happy

" is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is " in the Lord his God, which made the heaven and earth, the " sea and all that therein is, which keepeth truth for ever." Thus his people have been witnesses in all generations, unto the faithfulness of God in his promises; the consideration whereof leaves no doubt or objection behind it.

Sect. II. And if we enquire into the grounds and reasons why God is, and ever must be most faithful in performing his promises, we shall find it is built upon stable and unshaken pillars: *viz.*

1. The holiness of his nature.
2. The all-sufficiency of his power.
3. The honour of his name.
4. The unchangeableness of his nature.

1. The faithfulness of God is built upon the perfect holiness of his nature, by reason whereof it is impossible for God to lie, Tit. i. 2. Heb. vi. 18. The deceitfulness of man flows from the corruption of the human nature, but "God is not a man that " he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent; " hath he said, and shall he not do it? Or hath he spoken, and " shall he not make it good?" Num. xxiii. 19. If there be no defect in his being, there can be none in his working; if his nature be pure holiness, all his ways must be perfect faithfulness.

2. It is built upon the all-sufficiency of his power; whatsoever he hath promised to his people, he is able to perform it; men sometimes falsify their promises, through the defects of ability to perform them; but God never out-promised himself; if he will work, none can lett, Isa. xliii. 13. He can do whatsoever he pleaseth to do, Psal. cxxxv. 6. The holiness of his nature engageth, and the almightiness of his power enables him to be faithful.

3. The glory and honour of his name may assure us of his faithfulness, in making good the promises, and all that good which is in the promises, to a tittle; for wherever you find a promise of God, you also find the name and honour of God given as a security for the performance of it; and so his name hath ever been pleaded with him by his people, as a mighty argument to work for them, Josh. vii. 9. *What wilt thou do for thy great name, q. d.* Lord, thine honour is a thousand times more than our lives, it is no such great matter what becomes of us; but ah, Lord, it is of infinite concernment that the glory of thy name be secured, and thy faithfulness kept pure and unspotted in the world. So again, Exod. xxxii. 11, 12. "And

" Moſes beſought the Lord his God, and ſaid, Lord, why doth " thy wrath wax hot againſt thy people which thou haſt brought " out of the land of Egypt, with great power, and with a " mighty hand? Wherefore ſhould the Egyptians ſpeak, and " ſay, for miſchief did he bring them out to ſlay them in the " mountains, and to conſume them from the face of the earth? " turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil againſt " thy people." *q. d.* It will be ſad enough for the hands of the Egyptians to fall upon thy people, but infinitely worſe for the tongues of the Egyptians to fall upon thy name.

4. The unchangeableneſs of his nature gives us the fulleſt aſſurance of his faithfulneſs in the promiſes, Mal. iii. 6. " I am " the Lord, I change not; therefore ye ſons of Jacob are not " conſumed." God's unchangeableneſs is his people's indemnity, and beſt ſecurity in the midſt of dangers; as there is not *yea* and *nay* with God, neither ſhould it be ſo with our faith; that which gives ſteadineſs to the promiſes, ſhould give ſteadineſs alſo to our expectations for the performance of them: and ſo much, briefly, of the faithfulneſs of God, abſolutely conſidered in the nature and grounds of it.

2. Next let us view the faithfulneſs of God, as it relates to the many great and precious promiſes made unto his people for their ſecurity, both in their

1. Temporal
2. Spiritual.

} Concernments.

1. We find the faithfulneſs of God pledged for the ſecurity of his people, in their ſpiritual and eternal concernments, againſt all their dangers and fears, threatening them on that account, and that more eſpecially in theſe three reſpects.

1. It is given them as their great and beſt ſecurity for the pardon of their ſins, 1 John i. 9. " If we confeſs our ſins, he is " faithful and juſt to forgive us our ſins, and to cleanſe us from " all unrighteouſneſs." Our greateſt danger comes from ſin; guilt is a fountain of fears, a pardoned ſoul only can look other troubles in the face boldly: as guilt begets fear, ſo pardon produces courage, and God's faithfulneſs in the covenant is, as it were, that pardon-office from whence we fetch our diſcharges and acquittances, Iſa. xliii. 25. " I, even I, am he that bloteth " out thy tranſgreſſions for mine own ſake." The promiſes of remiſſion are made for Chriſt's ſake, and when made, they muſt be fulfilled for his own, that is his faithfulneſs ſake.

2. It is engaged for the perſeverance of the ſaints, and their continuance in the ways of God in the moſt hazardous and dif-

ficult times; this was the encouragement given them, 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. "Who ſhall alſo confirm you unto the end, that ye may be "blameleſs in the day of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt; God is faith-"ful by whom ye were called unto the fellowſhip of his Son Jeſus "Chriſt our Lord." Ah Lord! might thoſe Corinthians ſay, the powers of the world are againſt us, ſuffering and death are before us, a treacherous and fearful heart within us. Ay, but yet fear not, Chriſt ſhall confirm you, whoſoever oppoſes you; though the world and your own hearts be deceitful, yet comfort yourſelves with this, your God is faithful.

3. The faithfulneſs of God is given by promiſe for his people's ſecurity in, and encouragement againſt, all their ſufferings and afflictions in this world, 2 Theſſ. iii. 2, 3. "That we may be "delivered from unreaſonable and wicked men, for all men have "not faith; but the Lord is faithful, who ſhall ſtabliſh you, and "keep you from evil." He prays they may be delivered from abſurd, treacherous, and unfaithful men, who would trepan and betray them to ruin; but this is propoſed as their relief, that when the treachery of men ſhall bring them into troubles, the faithfulneſs of God ſhall ſupport them under, and deliver them out of thoſe troubles; they ſhall have ſpiritual ſupports from God under their deepeſt ſufferings from men, 1 Pet. iv. 19.

2. God's faithfulneſs is engaged for his people's indemnity and ſecurity, amidſt the temporal and outward evils whereunto they are liable in this world; and that, either to preſerve them from troubles, Pſal. xci. 1, 2, 3, 4. or to open a ſeaſonable door of deliverance out of trouble, 1 Cor. x. 13. In both, or either of which, the hearts of chriſtians may be at reſt in this troubleſome world; for what need thoſe troubles fright us, which either ſhall never touch us, or if they do, ſhall never hurt, much leſs ruin us?

Section III. Having taken a ſhort view of God's faithfulneſs in the promiſes, it will be a lovely ſight to take one view of it more, as it is actuated, and exerted in his providences over his people. Believe it, Chriſtians, the faithfulneſs of God runs through all his works of providence, whenever he goes forth to work in the world, "Faithfulneſs is the girdle of his loins," Iſa. xi. 5. It is an alluſion to workmen who going forth in the morning to their labour, gird their loins or reins with a girdle; now there is no work wrought by God in this world, but his faithfulneſs is as the girdle of his loins: The conſideration whereof ſhould make the moſt deſpondent believer, *Gird up the loins of his mind*, that is, encourage, and ſtrengthen his drooping and diſcouraged heart. Thoſe works of God which are wrought in faithfulneſs, and in

purſuit of his eternal purpoſes, and gracious promiſes, ſhould rather delight, than affright us, in beholding them. It pluckt out the ſting of David's affliction, when he conſidered it was in very faithfulneſs, that God had afflicted him, Pſal. cxix. 89, 90. But more particularly, let us behold with delight the faithfulneſs of God, making good ſix ſorts of promiſes to his people, in the days of their affliction and trouble, *viz.*

1. The promiſes of preſervation.
2. The promiſes of ſupport.
3. The promiſes of direction.
4. The promiſes of proviſion.
5. The promiſes of deliverance.
6. The promiſes of ordering, and directing the event to their advantage.

1. There are promiſes in the word for your preſervation from ruin, and what you read in thoſe promiſes, you daily ſee the ſame fulfilled in your own experiences. You have a promiſe in Pſal. lvii. 3. "He ſhall ſend from heaven, and ſave me "from the reproach of him that would ſwallow me up. Selah. "God ſhall ſend forth his mercy and his truth." Say now, have you not found it ſo? When hell hath ſent forth its temptations to defile you, the world it's perſecutions to deſtroy you, your own heart its unbelieving fears to diſtract and ſink you, hath not your God ſent forth all his mercy and his truth to ſave you? Hath not his truth been your ſhield and buckler? Pſal. xci. 4. May you not ſay, with the church, it is of his mercy you are not conſumed, his mercies are new every morning, and great is his faithfulneſs, Lam. iii. 23.

2. As you have ſeen it actually fulfilling the promiſes for your preſervation, ſo you may ſee it making good all the promiſes in his word for your ſupport in troubles. That is a ſweet promiſe, Pſal. xci. 15. "I will be with him in trouble: I will "deliver him." You have alſo a very ſupporting promiſe in Iſa. xli. 10. "Fear not thou, for I am with thee: be not diſ-"mayed, for I am thy God: I will ſtrengthen thee, yea, I will "help thee, yea, I will uphold thee with the right-hand of "my righteouſneſs." Oh! how evidently hath the faithfulneſs of God ſhone forth in the performance of his word to you in this reſpect! you are his witneſſes, you would have ſunk in the deep waters of trouble if it had not been ſo. So ſpeaks David, Pſal. lxxiii. 26. "My heart and my fleſh faileth; but God is "the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever." Have you not found it ſo with you as it is in 2 Cor. xii. 10. "Therefore

" I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in " persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am " weak, then am I strong." God's strength hath been made perfect in your weakness, by this you have been carried through all your troubles; hitherto hath he helped you.

3. As you have seen it faithfully fulfilling the promises for your preservation, and support; so you have seen it in the direction of your ways. So runs that promise, Psal. xxxii. 8. " I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way that thou shalt " go: I will guide thee with mine eye." Certain it is, " That " the way of man is not in himself," Jer. x. 23. O how faithfully hath your God guided you, and stood by you in all the difficult cases of your life! Is not that promise, Heb. xiii. 5. faithfully fulfilled to a tittle, " I will never leave thee, nor forsake " thee?" Surely you can set your seal to that in John xvii. 17. " Thy word is truth;" had you been left to your own counsels you had certainly perished; as it is said of them in Psal. lxxxi. 12. " I gave them up unto their own hearts lusts: and " they walked in their own counsels."

4. As there are promises in the word for your preservation, support, and direction; so in the fourth place there are promises for your provisions, as in Psal. xxxiv. 9. the Lord hath promised that *they that fear him shall not want.* When they are driven to extremity, he will provide, Isa. xli. 17. " When the " poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their " tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the " God of Israel will not forsake them." And is not this faithfully performed? " He hath given meat unto them that fear " him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant," Psal. cxi. 5. In all the exigencies of your lives, you have found him faithful to this day; you are his witnesses that his providences never failed you, his care hath been renewed every morning for you; how great is his faithfulness!

5. You also find in the word some reviving promises for your deliverances. You have a very sweet promise in Psal. xci. 14. " Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver " him:" and again, Psal. l. 15. " Call upon me in the day of " trouble; I will deliver thee;" you have done so, and he hath made a way to escape. Our lives are so many monuments of mercy; we have lived among lions, yet preserved, Psal. lvii. 4. The burning bush was an emblem of the church miraculously preserved.

6. There are promises in the word for the ordering and directing all the occurrences of providence to your great advanta-

ges; so it is promised, Rom. viii. 28. "That all things shall "work together for good, to them that love God." Fear not, Christians, however you find it now; whilst you are tossing to and fro upon the unstables waves of this world; you shall find, to be sure, when you come to heaven, that all the troubles of your lives were guided as steddily by this promise, as ever any ship at sea was directed to its port, by the compass or north-star.

And now what remains, but that I press you as before,

1. To enter into this chamber of divine faithfulness.

2. To shut the door after you.

3. And then to live comfortably on it in evil days.

1. Enter into this chamber of God's faithfulness by faith, and hide yourselves there. Every man is a lie, but God is true, eternally and unchangeably faithful. Oh! exercise your faith upon it, be at rest in it.

Now there are two great and weighty arguments to press you to enter into this chamber of divine faithfulness.

Arg. 1. Is fetched from the nature of God, who cannot lie, Tit. i. 2. "He is not a man, that he should lie," Numb. xxiii. 19. "Neither the son of man that he should repent: hath he "said, and shall he not do it? or hath he spoken, and shall he "not make it good?" Remember upon what everlasting, steddy grounds the faithfulness of God is built. These are immutable things, Heb. vi. 18. This Abraham built upon, Rom. iv. 21. "being fully persuaded, that what he had promised, he "was able also to perform." He accounted him faithful that promised. What would you expect or require in the person that you are to trust? You would,

1. Expect a clear promise; and lo! you have a thousand all the scripture over, fitted to all the cases of your souls and bodies. This you may plead with God, as David, Psal. cxix. 49. "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou "hast caused me to hope." So Jacob pleaded, Gen. xxxii. 12. "Thou saidst I will surely do thee good." These are God's bonds and obligations.

2. You would expect sufficient power to make good what he promiseth. This is in God as a fair foundation of faith, Isa. xxvi. 4. "Trust ye in the Lord for ever; for in the Lord "Jehovah is everlasting strength;" Because of thy strength we will wait upon thee: creatures cannot, but God can do what he will.

3. You would expect infinite goodness and mercy inclining him to help and save you. Why, so it is here, Psal. cxxx.

7. "Let Iſrael hope in the Lord, for with the Lord there is "mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." So Moſes, Exod. xxxiii. 18. "I beſeech thee ſhew me thy glory." The requeſt was, a view of God's glory: The anſwer is, *my goodneſs ſhall paſs before thee*; which hints to us, that though all God's attributes be glorious, yet that he moſt glories in is his goodneſs. And then,

4. You would expect that none of his promiſes were ever blotted or ſtained by his unfaithfulneſs at any time; and ſo it is here, Joſh. xxiii. 14. *Not one thing hath failed*; all are come to paſs, all ages have ſealed this concluſion, *Thy word is truth, thy word is truth.*

Arg. 2. Beſides all this, you have the encouragement of all former experiences, both others, and your own, as a ſecond argument to preſs you to enter into this chamber of ſafety, the faithfulneſs of God.

1. You have the experiences of others. Saints have reckoned the experiences of others that lived a thouſand years before them, as excellent arguments to quicken their faith: So Hoſ. xii. 4. he had power over the angel, and prevailed; he found him in Bethel, and there he ſpake. Remember there was a Joſeph with us in priſon, a Jeremy in the dungeon, a Daniel in the den, a Peter in chains, an Hezekiah upon the brink of the grave; and they all found the help of God moſt faithfully protecting them, and ſaving them in all their troubles. Suitable to this is that in Pſal. xxii. 4, 5. "Our fathers truſted in thee; "they truſted, and thou deliveredſt them; they cried unto "thee, and were delivered; they truſted in thee, and were "not confounded."

2. Your own experiences may encourage your faith: So David's did, 1 Sam. xvii. 37. "The Lord that delivered me "out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, "he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philiſtine." So did Paul's experience encourage his faith, in 2 Cor. i. 10. "Who delivered us from ſo great a death, and doth deliver; "in whom we truſt that he will yet deliver us." Thus enter into the faithfulneſs of God by faith.

2. Let me beg you to be ſure to ſhut the doors after you, againſt all unbelieving doubts, jealouſies, and ſuſpicions of the faithfulneſs of God? the beſt men may find temptations of that nature; ſo did good Aſaph, though an eminent ſaint, Pſal. lxxvii. 78. "Will the Lord caſt off for ever: and will he be "favourable no more? Is his mercy clean gone for ever?

" doth his promiſe fail for evermore?" Theſe jealouſies are apt to creep in upon the minds of men, eſpecially when,

1. God delays to anſwer our prayers as ſoon as we expect the return of them; we are all in haſte for a ſpeedy anſwer, forgetting that ſeaſons of prayer are our ſeed-times; and when we have ſown that precious ſeed, we muſt wait for the harveſt, as the huſbandman doth. Even a precious Heman may find a faint qualm of unbelief and deſpondency ſeizing him by the long ſuſpenſion of God's anſwers, Pſal. lxxxviii. 9, 10, 11.

2. It will be hard to ſhut the door upon unbelief, when all things in the eyes of our ſenſe and reaſon ſeem to work againſt the promiſe; it will require an Abraham's faith at ſuch a time to glorify God by believing in hope againſt hope, Rom. iv. 18. If ever thou hopeſt to enjoy the ſweet repoſe and reſt of a Chriſtian in evil times, thou muſt reſolve, whatever thine eyes do ſee, or thy ſenſes report, to hold faſt this as a moſt ſure concluſion; God is faithful, and his word is ſure; and that although " clouds and darkneſs be round about him, yet righte-" ouſneſs and judgment are the habitation of his throne," Pſal. xcvii. 2.

Oh! that you would once learn firmly to depend on God's faithfulneſs, and fetch your daily reliefs and ſupports thence, whenſoever you are oppreſſed and aſſaulted, either,

1. By ſpiritual troubles. When you walk in darkneſs, and have no light, then you are to live by acts of truſt and recumbency upon the moſt faithful one, Iſa. l. 10. Or,

2. By temporal diſtreſſes; ſo did the people of God of old, Heb. iii. 17, 18. He lived by faith on this attribute, when all viſible comforts and ſupplies were out of ſight.

But eſpecially, let me warn and caution you againſt five principal enemies to your repoſe upon the faithfulneſs of God, *viz.*

1. Diſtracting cares, which divide the mind, and eat out the peace and comfort of the heart, and which is worſt of all, they reflect very diſhonourably upon God who hath pledged his faithfulneſs and truth for our ſecurity; againſt which, I pray you bar the door by thoſe two ſcriptures, Phil. iv. 6. " Be careful " for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication " with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto " God." And that in 1 Pet. v. 7. " Caſting all your care upon " him, for he careth for you."

2. Bar the door againſt unchriſtian deſpondency, another enemy to the ſweet repoſe of your ſouls in this comfortable and quiet chamber of divine faithfulneſs: you will find this unbe-

coming and uncomfortable diſtemper of mind inſinuating and creeping in upon you, except you believe and reaſon it out, as David did, Pſal. xlii. 11. "Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? "and why art thou diſquieted within me? Hope thou in God, "for I ſhall yet praiſe him."

3. Bar the door of your heart againſt carnal policies and ſinful ſhifts, which war againſt your own faith, and God's faithfulneſs, as much as any other enemy whatſoever. This was the fault of good David in a day of trouble, 1 Sam. xxvii. 1. "And "David ſaid in his heart, I ſhall now periſh one day by the "hand of Saul; there is nothing better for me than that I "ſhould ſpeedily eſcape into the land of the Philiſtines." *Alas*, poor David! nothing better than this? Time was when thou couldſt think on a better way, when thou couldſt ſay, *at what time I am afraid I will truſt in thee.* How doſt thou forget thyſelf in this ſtrait! doth thy old refuge in God fail thee now, can the Philiſtines ſecure thee better than the promiſes? wilt thou fly from thy beſt friend to thy worſt enemies? but what need we wonder at David, who find the ſame diſtemper almoſt unavoidable to ourſelves in like caſes?

4. Shut the door againſt diſcontents at, and murmurings againſt, the diſpoſitions of providence, whatever you feel or fear: I perſuade you not to a ſtoical apathy, and inſenſibleneſs of the evils of the times, that would preclude the exerciſe of patience. If the martyrs had all had the dead palſy before they came to the fire, their faith and patience had not triumphed ſo gloriouſly as they did; but on the contrary, beware of grudgings againſt the ways and will of God, than which, nothing militates more againſt your faith, and the peace and quietneſs of your hearts.

5. To conclude, ſhut the door againſt all ſuſpicions and jealouſies of the firmneſs and ſtability of the promiſes, when you find all ſenſible comforts ſhaking and trembling under your feet; have a care of ſuch dangerous queſtions as that, Pſal. lxxvii. 8. *Doth his promiſe fail?* Theſe are the things which undermine the foundation both of your faith and comfort.

6. In a word, having ſheltered your ſouls in this chamber of reſt, and thus ſhut the doors behind you, all that you have to do is to take your reſt in God, and enjoy the pleaſure of a ſoul reſigned into the hands of a faithful Creator, by oppoſing the faithfulneſs of God to all the fickleneſs and unfaithfulneſs you will daily find in men, Micah vii. 6, 7. yea, to the weakneſs and fading of your own natural ſtrength and ability; Pſal. lxxiii. 26. "My fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength

" of my heart, and my portion for ever." And ſo much of the third chamber prepared for believers in the name of their God.

CHAP. IX.

Opening to believers the unchangeableneſs of God, as a fourth chamber of refuge and reſt in times of trouble.

Sect. I. IT is ſaid, Prov. ix. 1. *Wiſdom hath builded her houſe, ſhe hath hewn out her ſeven pillars, (i. e.)* She hath raiſed her whole building upon ſolid and ſtable foundations; for, indeed, the ſtrength of every building is according to the ground-work upon which it is erected. *Debile fundamentum fallit opus.* The wiſdom and love of God have built an houſe for a refuge and ſanctuary to believers in tempeſtuous and evil times, containing many pleaſant and comfortable chambers prepared for their lodgings, till the calamities be over-paſt; three of them have been already opened, *viz.* The power, wiſdom, and faithfulneſs of God.

The laſt of which leads into a fourth, much like unto it, namely, the unchangeableneſs of God; wherein his people may find as much reſt and comfort amidſt the viciſſitudes of this unſtable world, as in any of the former. This world is compared, Rev. xv. 2. to *a ſea of glaſs mingled with fire.* A ſea for its turbulency and inſtability; a ſea of glaſs for the brittleneſs and frailty of every thing in it; and a ſea of glaſs mingled with fire, to repreſent the ſharp ſufferings and fiery trials, with which the ſaints are exerciſed here below. The only ſupport and comfort we have againſt the ficklenеſs and inſtability of the creature, is the unchangeableneſs of God.

There is a twofold changeableneſs in the creature;

1. Natural, the effect of ſin.
2. Sinful in its own nature.

1. Natural, let in by the fall upon all the creation; by reaſon whereof the ſweeteſt creature is but a fading flower, Pſal. cii. 26. Time, like a moth, frets out the beſt wrought garment with which we cloath and deck ourſelves in this world, *temporalia rapit tempus.* Our moſt pleaſant enjoyments, wives, children, eſtates, like the gourd in which Jonas ſo delighted himſelf, may wither in a night; ſin rings theſe changes all the world over.

2. Sinful, from the falseneſs, inconſtancy, and deceitfulneſs of the creature; Solomon puts a hard queſtion which may poſe the whole world to anſwer it, Prov. xx. 6. *A faithful man who can find?* The meaning is, a man of perfect and univerſal faithfulneſs is a *phoenix*, ſeldom or never to be found in this world; for when a queſtion in ſcripture is moved and let fall again without any anſwer, then the ſenſe is negative; but tho' the believer deſpair of finding an unchangeable man, it is his happineſs and comfort to find an unchangeable God.

The unchangeableneſs of God will appear three ways.

1. By ſcripture emblems.
2. By ſcripture aſſertions.
3. By convincing arguments.

1. By ſcripture emblems. Remarkable to this purpoſe is that place, Jam. i. 17. where God is called "the Father of lights, "with whom is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning;" no variableneſs. The word is, παραλλαγη, an aſtronomical term, commonly applied to the heavenly bodies, which have their parallaxes, *i. e.* their declinations, revolutions, viciſſitudes, eclipſes, increaſes and decreaſes: but God is a Sun that never riſes nor ſets, but is everlaſtingly and unchangeably one and the ſame; with him is no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning, τροπης ἀποσκιασμα. The ſun in its zenith caſts no ſhadow, it is the tropic, or turning of its courſe, that cauſes the ſhadow; the very ſubſtance of turning is with man; but not the leaſt ſhadow of turning with God. And in Deut. xxxii. 4. Moſes tells us, *God is a rock, and his work is perfect.* And indeed perfect working neceſſarily follows a perfect being. Now there is nothing found in nature more ſolid, fixed, and immutable than a rock; the firmeſt buildings will decay; a few ages will make them a ruinous heap; but though one age paſs away, and another comes, the rocks abide where and what they were; *Our God is the rock of ages;* and yet one ſtep higher, in Zech. vi. 1. his decrees and purpoſes are called mountains of braſs, that is, moſt firm, durable, and unchangeable purpoſes. Thus the immutability of God is ſhadowed forth to us in ſcripture emblems.

2. The ſame alſo you will find in plain, poſitive ſcripture aſſertions; ſuch as theſe that follow, Mal. iii. 6. "I am the "Lord, I change not, therefore ye ſons of Jacob are not con-"ſumed." And Job. xxiii. 13. "He is in one mind, and who "can turn him?" Men are in one mind to day, and another to morrow; the winds are not more variable than the minds of men; but God is in one mind, the purpoſes of his heart never change. *Thou art the ſame,* or as ſome tranſlate, *Thou art thy-*

self for ever, Pſal. cii. 27. Thus when Moſes deſired to know his name, that he might tell Pharoah from whom he came; the anſwer is, *I AM hath ſent me*, Exod. iii. 14. not I was, or I will be, but *I AM THAT I AM*, noting the abſolute unchangeableneſs of his nature.

3. The unchangeableneſs of God is fully proved by convincing arguments which divines commonly draw from ſuch *topics* as theſe, *viz.*

1. The perfection of his goodneſs.
2. The purity of his nature.
3. The glory of his name.

Arg. 1. From the perfection of his goodneſs and bleſſedneſs; God is *optimus maximus*, the beſt and chiefeſt good, and in that ſenſe, "There is none good but one, which is God," Mark x. 18. From whence it is thus argued, If there be any change in God, that change muſt either be for the better, or for the worſe, or into a ſtate equal with that he poſſeſſed before.

But not for the better, for then he could not be the chief good; nor for the worſe, for then he muſt ceaſe to be God, the perfection of whoſe nature is perfectly exclusive of all defects; nor into an equal ſtate of goodneſs with that he poſſeſſed before; that notion would involve *Polytheiſm*, and ſuppoſe two firſt and equal beings, beſides the vanity of ſuch a change would be abſolutely repugnant to the wiſdom of God.

Therefore with the Father of lights can be no variableneſs nor ſhadow of turning.

Arg. 2. The unchangeableneſs of God may be evinced from the purity, ſincerity, and uncompoundedneſs of his being, in which there neither is, nor can be the leaſt mixture, he being a pure act. From whence it is thus argued;

If there be any change in God, that change muſt be made either by ſomething without himſelf; or by ſomething within himſelf, or by both together.

But it cannot be by any thing without himſelf; for in him all created dependent beings live and move, and enjoy the beings they have; and all the changes that are among them, are from the pleaſure of this unchangeable Being, he changeth them, but it is not poſſible for him, upon whoſe pleaſure they ſo entirely, and abſolutely depend, both as to their beings and workings, to ſuffer any change himſelf from, or by them.

Nor can any ſuch change be made upon God by any thing within himſelf; for that would ſuppoſe action and paſſion, *movens et motum*, a mixture and compoſition in his nature,

which is abſolutely rejected and excluded by the ſimplicity and purity thereof; ſeeing therefore it can neither be from any power without him, nor any mixture within him, there can be no change at all made on him.

Arg. 3. That is by no means to be aſcribed to God, which, at once, eclipſes the glory of his name, and overthrows the hopes and comforts of all his people.

But ſo would the ſuppoſition of mutability in God do, this would level him with the vain changeable creature; whereas it is a principal part of his glory, that "He is not a man that he "ſhould lie, neither the ſon of man that he ſhould repent," Numb. xxiii. 19. This alſo would overthrow the hopes and comforts of all his people, which are built upon this attribute as upon their ſtable and ſolid foundation: Among divers others we find three principal privileges of the people of God, built upon his immutability, *viz.*

1. Their perſeverance in grace.
2. Their comfort in the promiſes.
3. Their hopes of eternal life.

1. Their perſeverance in grace is built upon the foundation of God's unchangeableneſs; one main reaſon why Chriſtians never repent of their choice of Chriſt, and the ways of Godlineſs, is, becauſe the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, Rom. xi. 29. Should God but once repent of the gifts of his grace he hath beſtowed on us, and alter in his love towards us, how ſoon would our love to God, and delight in God vaniſh, as the image in the glaſs doth, when the man that looked upon it hath once turned away his face?

2. All their comfort in the promiſes is built upon God's unchangeableneſs. The promiſes are the ſprings of conſolation; ſhould they fail and dry up, the whole world could not afford them one drop of ſpiritual comfort to refreſh their thirſty ſouls; the ſtrength of our conſolation immediately reſults from the ſtability and firmneſs of the ſcripture promiſes, Heb. vi. 18.

3. Their hope of eternal life depends upon the unchangeableneſs of God that hath promiſed, Tit. i. 2. "In hope of eternal "life, which God that cannot lie, promiſed before the world "began." Take away then the immutability of God, and you at once darken and eclipſe his glory, and overturn the perſeverance, conſolations, and hopes of all his people; but bleſſed be God theſe things are built upon firm foundations.

1. His nature is unchangeable, "Thou art the ſame for ever," Pſal. cii. 27. The heavens though they be the pureſt, and therefore the moſt durable and unchangeable part of the crea-

tion; yet they shall perish and wax old, and be changed as a vesture, but our God is the same for ever.

2. His power is unchangeable, Isa. lix. 1. "The Lord's hand "is not shortned." Time will enfeeble the strongest creature, and cut short the power of the hands of the mighty, they cannot do in their decrepit age as they were wont to do in their youthful and vigorous age; but the Lord's hand never is, nor can be shortned.

3. The counsels and purposes of his heart are unchangeable, Psal. xxxiii. 11. "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, "the thoughts of his heart to all generations."

4. The goodness, truth, and mercy of God are unchangeable, Psal. c. 5. "The Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting, "and his truth endureth to all generations."

5. The word of God is unchangeable. Though all flesh be as grass, and the goodliness thereof as the flower of the field, yet the word of our God shall stand for ever; all the promises contained therein are sure and stedfast: Not yea and nay, but yea and Amen for ever, 2 Cor. i. 20.

6. The love of God is an unchangeable love, Jer. xxxi. 3. "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love."

7. In a word, all the gracious pardons of God are unchangeable; as they are full without exceptions, so they are final pardons without any revocation. "I will be merciful to their un- "righteousness, and their iniquities and sins will I remember "no more," Heb. viii. 12. And thus much briefly of God's unchangeableness absolutely considered in itself.

Sect. II. Let us next consider, and briefly view the unchangeableness of God in its respect and relation,

1. To his promises.

2. To his providences.

1. The immutability of God gives down its comforts to believers through the promises, there is no other way by which they can have a comfortable admission into this chamber or attribute of God; and there are six sorts of promises in the word, by which it is highly improveable to their support and comfort in an evil day. For,

1. The unchangeable God hath engaged himself by promise to be with his people in all times, and in all straits, Heb. xiii. 5. "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." The life, joy and comfort of a believer lies in the bosom of that promise, the conclusion of faith from thence is sweet and sure: If I shall never be forsaken of my God, let hell and earth do their worst, I can never be miserable.

2. The unchangeable God hath promiſed to maintain their graces, and thereby his intereſt in them for ever, Jer. xxxii. 40. "And I will make an everlaſting covenant with them, that I "will not turn away from them to do them good: But I will "put my fear in their hearts, that they ſhall not turn away "from me." Where the Lord undertakes for both parts in the covenant, his own and theirs: *I will not turn away from them!* Oh unexpreſſible mercy! Yea, but Lord, may the poor believer ſay, that is not ſo much my fear, as that my treacherous heart will turn away from thee. No, ſaith God, I will take care for that alſo: I will put my fear into thy heart, and, thou ſhalt never depart from me.

3. The unchangeable God hath promiſed to eſtabliſh the covenant with them for ever; ſo that thoſe who are once taken into that gracious covenant ſhall never be turned out of it again, Iſa. liv. 10. "The mountains ſhall depart, and the hills be re-"moved, but my kindneſs ſhall not depart from thee, neither "ſhall the covenant of my peace be removed, ſaith the Lord "that hath mercy on thee."

4. The unchangeable God hath ſecured his loving-kindneſs to his people, by promiſe under all the trials and ſmarting rods of affliction with which he chaſtens them in this world; he hath reſerved to himſelf the liberty of afflicting them, but bound himſelf by promiſe never to remove his favour from them, Pſal. lxxxix. 33, 34. "I will viſit their tranſgreſſion with the rod, "and their iniquity with ſtripes, nevertheleſs my loving-kind-"neſs will I not take from them, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to "fail."

5. The promiſes of a joyful reſurrection from the dead are grounded upon the immutability of God, Matth. xxii. 32. "I "am the God of Abraham, the God of Iſaac, and the God of Ja-"cob; God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the "living." Death hath made a great change upon them, but none upon their God; though they be not, he is ſtill the ſame: therefore they are not loſt in death, but ſhall aſſuredly be found again in the reſurrection.

6. To conclude, the promiſes of the ſaints eternal happineſs with God in heaven are founded in his immutability, 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. Tit. i. 2. By all which you ſee what a pleaſant lodging is prepared for the ſaints in the unchangeable promiſes of God, amidſt all the changes and alterations here below.

2. Once more let us view the unchangeableneſs of God in his providences towards his people, whatever changes it makes upon us, or whatever changes we ſeem to diſcern in it, no

thing is more certain than this, that it holds one and the same tenor, purſues one and the ſame deſign in all that it doth upon us, or about us. Providences indeed are very variable, but the deſigns and ends of God in them all are invariable, and the ſame for ever. It is noted in Ezek. i. 12. "That the wheels "went ſtraight forward; whether the ſpirit was to go, they "went, and they turned not when they went." As it is in nature, ſo in providence, you have one day fair, halcyon, and bright, another dark and full of ſtorms; one ſeaſon hot, another cold; but all theſe ſerve to one and the ſame end and deſign to make the earth fruitful; and the aim of all providences is to make you holy and happy. That is a ſweet promiſe, Rom. viii. 28. "All things ſhall work together for good to them that "love God." This is the compaſs by which all providences ſteer their courſe, as a ſhip at ſea doth by the chart: but more particularly let us note the unchangeableneſs of God in his providences of all kinds, effective and permiſſive, and ſee in them all his unchangeable righteouſneſs and goodneſs.

1. It muſt needs be ſo, conſidering the unchangeableneſs of his decree, 2 Tim. ii. 19. "The foundation of God ſtandeth "ſure." Providences ſerve, but never fruſtrate; execute, but cannot make void the decree; ſo that you may ſay of the moſt afflicting providences, as David doth of the ſtormy winds, Pſal. cxlviii. 8. *They all fulfil his word.*

2. The wiſdom of God proves it; he will not ſuffer his works or permiſſions to claſh with his deſigns and purpoſes: Divine wiſdom ſhews itſelf in the ſteddy direction of all things to the ultimate end. To open this in ſome particulars, conſider,

1. Doth the Lord permit wicked men to rage and inſult, perſecute and vex his people? Yet all this while providence is in its right way, it walks in as direct a line to your good, as when it is in a more pleaſant path of peace, Jer. xxiv. 5. "Thus ſaith "the Lord, the God of Iſrael, like theſe good figs, ſo will I ac-"knowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, "whom I have ſent out of this place into the land of the Chal-"deans for their good." Iſrael was ſent to Babylon for their good. This improves your faith and patience, Rev. xiii. 10. Here is the patience and faith of the ſaints. So Rom. v. 2, 3. "By whom alſo we have acceſs by faith into this grace, where-"in we ſtand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God; and not "only ſo, but we glory in tribulations alſo; knowing that tri-"bulation worketh patience." By this you are weaned from, and mortified to this world.

2. Doth the Lord in his providence order many and frequent

cloſe and ſmarting afflictions for you? Why, lo! here is the ſame deſign managing as effectually, as if all the peace and proſperity in the world were ordered for you; the face of providence indeed is not the ſame, but the love of God is ſtill the ſame; he loves you as much when he ſmites, as when he ſmiles on you: for what are his ends in afflicting you, and what the ſanctified fruits of your afflictions? Is it not,

1. To purge your iniquities? Iſa. xxvii. 9. "By this there-
" fore ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the
" fruit to take away his ſin."

2. To reduce your hearts to God? Pſal. cxix. 67. "Before
" I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now have I kept thy word."

3. To quicken you to your duties: Let the beſt man be without afflictions, and he will quickly grow dull in the way of his duty.

3. Doth God let looſe the chain of Satan to tempt and buffet you? Yet is he ſtill the ſame God to you as before; for do but obſerve his ends in that permiſſion, and you will find, that, by theſe things, the Lord is leading you towards that deſired aſſurance of his love which your ſouls long after. Few Chriſtians attain to any conſiderable ſettlement of ſoul, but by ſuch ſhakings and combats, the end of theſe permiſſions is to put you to your knees, and blow up a greater flame and fervour of ſpirit in prayer, 2. Cor. xii. 8. So that, eventually, theſe permiſſions of providence prove ſingular advantages and bleſſings to you.

Sect. III. What remains then, ſeeing God is unchangeable in his love to his people, purſuing the great ends of all his gracious promiſes in a ſteddy courſe of providence, wherein he will never effect, or permit any thing that is really repugnant to his own glory, or their good; but that we enter alſo into this chamber of reſt, ſhut the doors about us, and comfortably improve the unchangeableneſs of God, while we ſee nothing but changes and troubles here below.

(1.) Enter into God's unchangeableneſs by faith, take up your lodging in this ſweet attribute alſo; and to encourage your faith thereunto, ſeriouſly conſider a few particulars.

1. Conſider how conſtant, firm and unchangeable God hath been to his people in all times and ſtraits; not one among the many thouſands of his people, that are paſſed on before you, but by frequent and certain experience have found him ſo. What a ſingular encouragement is this to our faiths in the caſe before us? Pſal. ix. 10. "They that know thy name,
" will put their truſt in thee, for thou, Lord, haſt not forſaken
them that ſeek thee." So Iſa. xxv. 4. "Thou haſt been a

"strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, "a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the "blast of the terrible ones is as the storm against the wall." Neither is there any thing in your experience contradictory to the encouraging reports others have made of God; you must acknowledge, that notwithstanding your own changeableness, who have hardly been able to maintain your hearts in any spiritual frame towards God for one day together, yet his mercies towards you have been new every morning, and great hath been his faithfulness. You have often turned aside from the way of your duty, and have not followed God in a steddy course of obedience; and yet, for all that, his goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life, as it is Psal. xxiii. 6.

2. Consider how often you have doubted and mistrusted the unchangeableness of God, and been forced, with shame and sorrow, to retract your folly therein; God hath many times convinced you, that his love to you is an unchangeable love, how many changes soever, in the course of his providence, have passed over you; consult Isa. xlix. 14. and Psal. lxxvii. 78. and see how the cases are parallel, both in respect of God's constancy to them and you, and the inconstancy of his people's faith then, and yours now; your fears and doubts are the same with theirs; though his goodness and love have been as unchangeable to you, as ever it was to them.

3. Consider the advocateship and intercession of Jesus Christ in heaven for you, by virtue whereof the favour and love of God becomes unalterable towards his people. If any thing can be supposed to cool or quench the love of God towards you, nothing in the world is more like to do it than your sin; and this, indeed, is that which you fear will estrange and alienate the heart of your God from you. But, reader, if thou be one that sincerely mournest for all the grief and dishonour of God by thy sin, applyest the blood of sprinkling to thy soul by faith, and makest mortification and watchfulness thy daily business; comfort thyself against that fear from that singular encouragement given thee in this case, 1 John ii. 1, 2. "My little children, "these things write I unto you, that ye sin not; and if any man "sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the "righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins." Look as the death of Christ healed the great breach betwixt God and thy soul, by thy reconciliation at first; so the powerful intercession of Christ in heaven, effectually prevents all new breaches

betwixt God and thy ſoul afterwards, ſo that he will never totally and finally caſt thee off again.

(2.) Shut the door behind you againſt all objections, ſcruples, and queſtionings of God's immutability, and, by a reſolved and ſteddy faith, maintain the honour of God in this point, by thy conſtant adherence to it, and dependence upon it; and eſpecially ſee that thou give him the glory of his unchangeableneſs.

1. When thou ſhalt ſee the greateſt alterations and changes made by his providence in the world. What though thou ſhouldſt live to ſee all things turned upſide down, the foundations out of courſe, all things drawing into a ſea of confuſion and trouble? yet in the midſt of thoſe public diſtractions, and diſtreſs of nations, encourage thou thyſelf in this; thy God, and his love to his people, is the ſame for ever. Pſal. xlvi. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. "God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in "trouble; therefore will we not fear, though the earth be mo-"ved, and the mountains be caſt into the midſt of the ſea, God "is in the midſt of her, ſhe ſhall not be moved."

2. Live by faith upon God's unchangeableneſs under the greateſt changes of your own condition in this world. Providence may make great alterations upon all your outward comforts, it may caſt you down, how dear ſoever you be to God, from riches into poverty, from health into ſickneſs, from honour into reproach, from liberty into bondage; thou mayeſt overlive all thy comfortable relations, and of a Naomi become a Marah. *Thou haſt lifted me up, and caſt me down*, ſaid as good a man as you, Pſal. cii. 10. Yet ſtill it is your duty, and will be your great privilege in the midſt of all theſe changes, to act your faith upon the never-changing God, as that holy man did, Hab. iii. 17. "Although the fig-tree ſhall not bloſſom, neither fruit be "in the vine; the labour of the olive ſhall fail; and the fields "ſhall yield no meat; the flocks ſhall be cut off from the fold, "and there ſhall be no herd in the ſtall; yet will I rejoice in "the Lord, I will joy in the God of my ſalvation;" *q. d.* Suppoſe a thouſand diſappointments of my earthly hopes, yet will I maintain my hope in God. O Chriſtian! with how many yets, notwithſtandings, and nevertheleſſes, muſt thy faith bear up in times of trouble, or thou wilt ſink.

3. See thou live upon God's unchangeableneſs, when age and ſickneſs ſhall inform thee, that thy great change is at hand; though thy heart and thy fleſh fail, comfort thyſelf with this, thy God will never fail thee, Pſal. lxxiii. 16. "O God (ſaith "David) thou haſt taught me from my youth, and hitherto "have I declared thy wondrous works, now alſo when I am

"old and gray-headed, forsake me not," Psal. lxxi. 17, 18.

4. Live upon the unchangeableness of God under the greatest and saddest changes of your spiritual condition; God may cloud the light of his countenance over thy soul, he may fill thee with fears and troubles, and the Comforter that should relieve thee may seem to be far off; yet still maintain thy faith in the unchangeableness of his loves; trust in the name of the Lord, stay thyself upon thy God, when thou walkest in darkness, and hast no light, Isa. l. 10. Thus shut thy door.

(3.) Improve the unchangeableness of God to thy best advantage in the worst times, by drawing thence such comfortable conclusions as these.

1. If God be an unchangeable God in his promises, and in his love to his people, what should hinder but the people of God may live happily and comfortably in the saddest times, and greatest troubles upon earth. "As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing, as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing all things," 2 Cor. vi. 10. "Certainly nothing ought to quench a Christian's mirth, that is not able to separate him from the love of Christ," Rom. viii. 35.

2. If God be an unchangeable God in his love to his people; then it becomes all that have special interest in this God, to be unchangeable and immoveable in the ways of their obedience towards him: God will not cast you off, see that you cast not off your duties, no, not when they are surrounded with difficulties; he loves you, though you often grieve him by sin; see that you still love him, though he often grieve and burden you by affliction: he will own you for his people under the greatest contempts and reproaches of the world; see that you own and honour his ways and truths, when you are under most reproach from a vile world,

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CHAP. X.

Opening the care of God for his people in times of trouble, as the fifth chamber of rest to believers.

Sect. I. CARE, in the general notion of it, as it is applied to the creature, imports the studiousness and solicitousness of our thoughts, for the safety and welfare of ourselves, or those we love and highly value. Now, though there be no such thing properly in God, at whose dispose and pleasure

all events are, and to whoſe counſels and appointments all difficulties muſt give way; yet he is pleaſed to accommodate himſelf to our weakneſs, and expreſs his regard and love to his people, by ſuch things as one creature doth to another, to which it is endeared by relation or affection. To this purpoſe we may find many ſignificant ſynonymous expreſſions in ſcripture, all importing the care of God over his people, in a pleaſant variety of notion and expreſſion, as Nah. i. 7. "The Lord "is good, a ſtrong hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth "them that truſt in him."

He knoweth them, *i. e.* he hath a ſpecial, tender, and careful eye upon them, to ſee their wants ſupplied, and to proteſt them in all their dangers; for in the common and general ſenſe he knoweth them that truſt not in him, as well as thoſe that do; and farther to clear this ſenſe of the place, it is ſaid, Pſal. xl. 17. "The Lord thinketh on them." Importing not only ſimple cogitation, but the immoration or abiding of his thoughts upon them, as our thoughts are wont to do upon that which we highly eſteem, eſpecially when any danger is near it. And yet farther, to clear this ſenſe, it is ſaid, Job xxxvi. 7. "He "withdraweth not his eye from the righteous." As when Moſes was expoſed in the ark of bulruſhes, where his life was in imminent hazards by the waters of Nilus on one ſide, and the Egyptian cut-throats on the other; his ſiſter Miriam kept watch at a diſtance, to ſee what would be done to him. Her eye was never off that ark wherein her dear brother lay; fear and care engaged her eye to keep a true watch for him. Thus the Lord withdraweth not his eye from the righteous. To the ſame purpoſe is that expreſſion, Deut. xxxiii. 3. "Yea, he loved "the people; all his ſaints are in thy hand." That which we dearly love and prize above ordinary, we keep in our own hands for its ſecurity, as not thinking it ſafe enough in any other hand or place. And once more, Iſa. xlix. 16. God is ſaid to engrave them upon the palms of his hands, alluding to what is cuſtomary among men, who, when they would charge their memories with ſomething of ſpecial concernment, uſe to change a ring, or bind a thread about the finger, to put them in mind of it. Thus is the care of our God expreſſed to us in ſcripture-notions. The amount of all which is given to us in that one proper and full expreſſion of the apoſtle, 1 Pet. i. 7. *He careth for you.* To open this chamber of divine care, as a place of ſweeteſt reſt, to our anxious and perplexed minds, in times of difficulty and hazard, it will be neceſſary that you ſeriouſly ponder,

1. The grounds and reaſons
2. The extent and compaſs } of the care of God.
3. The lovely properties

(1.) The grounds and reaſons of God's care for his people; which are,

1. The ſtrict and dear relations in which he is pleaſed to own them. Believers are his children, and you know how naturally children engage and draw forth the father's care for them. This is the argument Chriſt uſes, Mat. vi. 31, 32. "Therefore, take no thought, ſaying, what ſhall we eat? Or "what ſhall we drink? Or wherewithal ſhall we be cloathed? "For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all "thoſe things." Children, eſpecially when young, diſquiet not themſelves about proviſions for back or belly, but leave that to the care of their parents, from whom, by the tye and bonds of nature and love, they expect proviſion for all thoſe wants: Every one takes care for his own; much more doth God for his own children, and, indeed, he expects his children ſhould live upon his care; as our children in their minority, do upon ours.

2. God's precious eſtimation and value of them, engage his conſtant care for them. Believers are his jewels, Mal. iii. 17. his peculiar people, 1 Pet. ii. 6. his ſpecial portion or treaſure in this world, Deut. xxxii. 9. and as ſuch he prizes and eſteems them above all the people of the earth, and accordingly exerciſeth his ſpecial care in all the dangers they are expoſed to. Special love engageth peculiar care.

3. The dangers and fears of the people of God, in this world, are many and great; and were it not for the Lord's aſſiduous and tender care over them, they muſt neceſſarily be ruined, both in ſoul and body by them. The church is God's vineyard, its enemies as ſo many wild boars to root it up: Upon this account he ſaith, Iſa. xxvii. 3. "I the Lord do keep "it, leſt any hurt it, I will keep it night and day." And, indeed, it is well for Iſrael, that he that keepeth it, never ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth, Pſal. cxxi. 4. that our houſes are in peace, that we and our dear relations fall not as a prey into cruel and bloody hands ſkilful to deſtroy, that we find any reſt, or comfort in ſo evil and dangerous a world, it is wholly and only to be aſcribed to the care of God over us and ours.

4. Jeſus Chriſt hath ſolemnly recommended all the people of God to his particular care. It was one of the laſt expreſſions of Chriſt's love to them at the parting hour, John xvii. 11. "And "now I am no more in the world, but theſe are in the world;

" and I come to thee: Holy Father, keep through thine own " name thoſe whom thou haſt given me." *q. d.* While I have been perſonally preſent with them, I took the ſame care of them, as a ſhepherd doth of his flock, or a tender father of his children: but now I muſt leave them in the world, and in the midſt of a world of dangers, fears, and troubles, againſt which they can make no proviſion or defence, themſelves. Father, remember them, look after them, when I ſhall be removed from them, they are thine as well as mine; and I recommend them, with my laſt breath, to thy care and protection. This is a ſpecial ground alſo of God's care for them.

5. Believers daily caſt themſelves upon the care of God, and reſign themſelves unto it in their daily prayers, and by their often renewed acts of faith, than which no act is found more engaging from the creature upon its God; though there be nothing of merit, yet there is much engaging efficacy in it, Iſa. xxvi. 3. " Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whoſe mind is " ſtayed on thee; becauſe he truſteth in thee." We find it ſo among ourſelves, the more firmly and entirely any one truſteth in us, and dependeth upon us, the more he engageth us to protect and relieve him. Now this is the daily work of Chriſtians to truſt God over all, and put all their concernments into his hand, which very truſt and dependance draws forth the care of God for them.

6. In a word, the many promiſes God hath made to his people, to preſerve, ſupport and ſupply them in all the times of need, engageth the care of God for them, as often as ſuch wants or dangers befal them; for, indeed, herein, he at once takes care for their neceſſity, and for his own honour and glory. They truſt to his word, and rely upon his promiſes, which therefore he will be careful to make good. This was the argument which the church pleaded in the time of imminent danger, to engage the care of God for them, Pſ. lxxiv. 20. *Have reſpect unto the covenant: for the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty, q. d.* O Lord, thy people are in the midſt of cruel enemies, take care for their protection, and though there be no worth in them, to which thou ſhouldeſt have reſpect, yet have reſpect unto thine own covenant: let the glory of thy name draw forth thy care to thy people.

Sect. II. We have ſeen the grounds and reaſons of God's care over his people, let us next view (2.) The extent and compaſs of this divine care; and here methinks the Lord ſaith to his people, as he ſaid to Abraham, Gen. xiii. 14, 15. *Lift up now thine eyes from the place where thou art, northward, and*

southward, and eastward, and westward, for all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. So here, poor timorous, dejected believer, lift up thine eyes from the place where thou art, and take a view of all the promises in the scriptures of truth; promises of supports under all burthens, supplies of all wants, deliverances out of all dangers, assistances in all distresses; to thee have I given them all as a portion for ever. This care of God walks around, and encompasseth the souls and bodies of them that fear him, day and night. There is no interest or concern of either found without the line of his all-surrounding care, and every one of his children are enfolded in his fatherly arms, Deut. xxxiii. 3. *All his saints are in thy hand.* All, and every one of their wants and straits are observed by this care, in order to their supply, Phil. iv. 19. *My God shall supply all your needs.*

1. Great is the care of God over the bodies of his people, and all the dangers and necessities of them as they daily grow; your meat and drink are daily provided for you by your father's care, Psal. cxi. 5. *He hath given meat unto them that fear him; he will be ever mindful of his covenant.* It is from this care of thy heavenly Father, that necessary provisions have been made for thee, of which, it may be, thou hast had no foresight: this is the God that hath fed thee all thy life long, Gen. xlviii. 15. It is from the same care thy body hath been cloathed, Mat. vi. 28. *How much more shall he cloath you, O ye of little faith?* It is through this care, you sleep in peace, and your rest is made sweet unto you, Prov. iii. 24. "When thou liest down, thou shalt "not be afraid; yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall "be sweet." In a word; thou owest all thy recoveries from dangerous diseases, and narrow escapes from the grave, to this care of thy God over thee, *He is the Lord that healeth thee,* Exod. xv. 26. That the incensed humours of thy body had not overflowed their banks, like an inundation of the sea, when they raged in thy dangerous diseases, is only because thy God took the care of thee, and set them their bounds.

2. Divine care extends itself to the souls of all that fear God, and to all the concernments of their souls; and manifestly discovers itself in all the gracious provisions it hath made for them. More particularly, it is from this tender, fatherly care that,

1. A Saviour was provided to redeem them, when they were ruined and lost by sin, John iii. 16. Rom. viii. 32.

2. That spiritual cordials are provided to refresh them, in all their sinking sorrows and inward distresses, Psal. xciv. 19.

3. That a door of deliverance is opened to them, when they are ſorely preſſed upon by temptations, and ready to be overwhelmed, 1 Cor. x. 13.

4. That a ſtrength above their own comes ſeaſonably to ſupport them, when they are almoſt over-weighed with inward troubles, when great weights are upon them, the everlaſting arms are underneath them, Pſal. cxxxviii. 3. Iſa. lvii. 16.

5. That their ruin is prevented, when they are upon the dangerous and ſlippery brink of temptations, and their feet almoſt gone, Pſal. lxxiii. 42. Hoſ. ii. 6. 2 Cor. xii. 7.

6. That they are recovered again after dangerous falls by ſin, and not left as a prey and trophy to their enemy, Hoſ. xiv. 4.

7. That they are guided and directed in the right way, when they are at a loſs, and know not what courſe to take, Pſal. xvi. 11. Pſal. lxxiii. 24.

8. That they are eſtabliſhed, and confirmed in Chriſt, in the moſt ſhaking and overturning times of trouble and perſecution; ſo that neither their hearts turn back, nor their ſteps decline from his ways, Jer. xxxii. 40. John iv. 14.

9. That they are upheld under ſpiritual deſertions, and recovered again out of that diſmal darkneſs, into the chearful light of God's countenance, Iſa. lvii. 16.

10. That they are at laſt brought ſafe to heaven, through the innumerable hazards and dangers all along their way thither, Heb. xi. 19. In all theſe things the care of their God eminently diſcovers itſelf for their ſouls.

(3.) Once more let us conſider the care of God for his people in the lovely properties thereof. As,

1. It is a fatherly care, than which none is greater or more tender, Mat. vi. 8. "Your father knoweth that you have need of "all theſe things." And indeed the greateſt and tendereſt care of an earthly father is but a faint ſhadow of that tender care which is in the heart of God over his children; for to that end we find them compared, Mat. vii. 11. "If ye then, being evil, "know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much "more ſhall your Father which is in heaven, give good things "to them which aſk him." The care of parents is careleſſneſs itſelf, compared with that care which God takes of his.

2. The care of God is an univerſal care, watching over all his people, in all ages, places, and dangers, 2 Chron. xvi. 9. "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro thro' the whole earth, "to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in behalf of them whoſe heart is perfect towards him." This was applied by way of reproof to

Aſa, who out of a ſinful diſtruſt of the care of God, relied upon the help of Syria, as if there had not been a God in heaven to take care of him and the people.

3. God's care over his, is aſſiduous and continual; "his mercies are new every morning, great is his faithfulneſs," Lam. iii. 22, 23. "He keeps his people night and day," Iſa. xxvii. 3. Could Satan, or his inſtruments find ſuch an hour, wherein the ſeven eyes of providence ſhould be all aſleep, that would be the fatal hour to our ſouls and bodies; but he that keepeth Iſrael ſlumbereth not.

4. God's care over his, is exceeding tender, far beyond the tenderneſs that the moſt affectionate mother ever felt in her heart towards the child that hanged on her breaſt, Iſa. xlix. 15. "Can a mother forget her ſucking child, *&c.* they may, yet will "not I forget thee." The birds of the air are not ſo tender of their young in the neſt, as God is of his people in the world, Iſa. xxxi. 5. Mercy fills the heart of God, yea, tender mercy, yea, multitudes of tender mercies, Pſal. li. 1.

5. The care of God is ſeaſonable care, which is always ſure to take the opportunity and proper ſeaſon of relieving his people; in the mount of the Lord it ſhall be ſeen; the beauty of providence is much ſeen in this thing, wherever you feel a want, this care finds a ſupply; and thus much briefly of the care of God abſolutely conſidered in itſelf.

Sect. III. It remains that we alſo conſider the care of God in its twofold reſpect, *viz.*

1. To his promiſes.
2. To his providences.

(1.) There are multitudes of promiſes found in the ſcriptures, exactly fitted as ſo many keys to open the door of this comfortable chamber, to receive, and ſecure all that fear God, whatever their wants, fears, or diſtreſſes are. Theſe are reducible into two claſſes, or ranks, *viz.*

1. More general and comprehenſive.
2. More particular promiſes.

The general and more comprehenſive promiſes are found in the general expreſſion of the covenant, as that to Abraham, Gen. xvii. 1. "I am God Almighty, walk thou before me, and "be perfect." *q. d.* Let it be thy care to walk exactly in the paths of obedience before me, and I will take care to ſupply all thy wants from the never-failing fountain of my all-ſufficiency; and of the ſame tenour is that, 2 Cor. vi. 18. I will be to them a Father, and they ſhall be my ſons and daughters, *i. e.* Expect

your provisions and protections from my care, as children do from their father. More particularly, there six sorts of promises, herein the care of God is particularly made over to his people in the greatest hazards and difficulties in this life, *viz.*

1. It is assigned and made over to them to supply all their needs, so far as the glory of God and advancement of their spiritual and eternal good shall require it, Psal. xxxiv. 9. "They "that fear the Lord, shall not want any good thing." All your livelihood is in that promise; thence comes your daily bread; your own and your family's meat is contained therein.

2. It is made over to the church and people of God for their defence against all dangers, Isa. liv. 17. "No weapon that is "formed against thee shall prosper." This promise wards off all the deadly blows, and puts by all the mortal thrusts that are made at you; here the care of God forms itself into a shield for your defence.

3. The care of God is engaged by promise for the moderation and mitigation of your afflictions, that they may not exceed your abilities to bear them, Isa. xxvii. 8, 9. "In mea-"sure when it shooteth forth, thou wilt debate with it; he stay-"ed the rough wind in the day of the east wind." If the wind blow from a cold corner, this promise moderates it, that it blow not a storm; all the sparing mercies and sweetening circumstances, which gracious souls thankfully note, in the sharpest trials, come from this promise, wherein the care of God is engaged for that purpose.

4. Divine care is put under the bond of a promise, for the direction and guidance of all their troubles and trials to an happy issue, Rom. viii. 28. "All things shall work together for "good." From what quarter soever the wind bloweth, God will take care that it shall be useful to drive you to your port; the very providences that cast you down, by virtue of this promise, prove as serviceable and beneficial as those that lift you up.

5. The care of God stands engaged, in the promise, for the help and aid of his people in all the extremities and exigencies of their lives, Psal. xlvi. 1. "God is our refuge and strength, a "very present help in trouble." Never is the care of God more visible and conspicuous, than in such times of need.

6. *Lastly*, The care of God is engaged to carry his people safe through all the dangers of the way, and bring them all home to glory at last, John x. 28. "I give unto them eternal "life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck "them out of my hand." This care of God, thus engaged for

you, is your convoy to accompany and secure you, till it see you safe into your harbour of eternal rest.

(2.) You have heard how the care of God is engaged for you by promise; now see how it actuates, and exerts itself for the people of God in the various methods of providence; and here, oh here is the sweetest pleasure of the Christian life, a delight far transcending all the delights of this life. Sit down Christian in this chamber also, and make but such observations upon the care of thy God as follow; and then tell me whether the world, with all its pleasures and delights, can give thee such another entertainment.

1. Reflect upon the constant, sweet, and suitable provisions, that from time to time have been prepared for thee, and thine, by this care of thy God; from whencesoever thy wants did come, I am sure from hence came thy supplies, it hath enabled thee to return the same answer the disciples did to that question, Luke xxii. 35. "Lacked ye any thing, and they said nothing."

2. Reflect with admiration upon the various difficulties of your lives, wherein your thoughts have been entangled, and out of which you have been extricated and delivered by the care of God over you; how oft have your thoughts been like a ravelled skeyn of silk, so entangled and perplexed with the difficulties and fears before you, that you could find no end, but the longer you thought, the more you were puzzled, till you have left thinking, and fell to praying; and there you have found the right end to wind up all your thoughts upon the bottom of peace and sweet contentment, according to that direction, Psal. xxxvii. 5. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in "him, and he shall bring it to pass."

3. Observe, with a melting heart, how the care of thy God hath disposed and directed thy way to unforeseen advantages: Had he not ordered thy steps when, and as he did, thou hadst not been in possession of those temporal and spiritual mercies that sweeten thy life at this day. Surely the steps of good men are ordered by the Lord: and as for thee, Christian, what reason hast thou, with an heart overflowing with love and thankfulness, to look up and say, *My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?* It is sweet to live by faith upon divine care. Oh what a serene life might we live, careful for nothing, but making known our requests unto God in every thing, Phil. iv. 6. casting all our care on him that careth for us, 1 Pet. v. 7. perplexing our thoughts about nothing, but rolling every burden upon godly faith. Thus lived holy Musculus, when reduced to

extreme poverty and danger at the ſame time; then it was that he ſolaced his ſoul with that comfortable diſtich, a good leſſon for others;

Eſt Deus in caelis, qui providus omnia curat,
Credentes nuſquam deſeruiſſe poteſt.

i. e. There is a God above, who, as he provides for, and takes care of all, can never forſake thoſe that believe in him.

The provident care of his heavenly Father, made his heart as quiet as the child at the breaſt. Chriſtian, thou knowest not what diſtreſsful days are coming upon the earth, nor what perſonal trials ſhall befal thee in this world; but I adviſe thee, as thou valueſt the tranquility and comfort of thy life, ſhut up thyſelf by faith in this chamber of divine care; it is thy beſt ſecurity in this world: Reflect frequently, and thankfully, upon the manifold ſupports, ſupplies, and ſalvations thou haſt already had from this fountain of mercies, and be not diſcouraged at new difficulties. When an eminent Chriſtian was told of ſome that way-laid him, to deſtroy him, his anſwer was, *Si Deus mei curam non habet, quid vivo?* In like manner thou mayſt ſay, if God had not taken care for thee, how couldſt thou have lived till now? how couldſt thou have over-lived ſo many troubles, fears, and dangers as thou haſt done?

CHAP. XI.

Opening the ſixth and laſt chamber, viz. The love of God, as a reſting-place to believing ſouls in evil times.

Sect. I. THOUGH all the attributes in the name or chambers of this houſe of God are glorious and excellent, yet this of love is tranſcendently glorious: Of this room it may be ſaid as it was of Solomon's royal chariot, Cant. iii. 10. "The midſt thereof is paved with love." In this attribute the glory of God is ſignally and eminently manifeſted, 1 John iv. 9, 10. And upon this foundation the hopes and comforts of all believers are built, and founded, Rom. viii. 35. "Who ſhall "ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? Shall tribulation, or diſ"treſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or "ſword?" He defies and deſpiſes them all, becauſe neither of them alone, nor altogether by their united ſtrength, can unclaſp the arms of divine love, in which believers are ſafely enfolded. In this attribute God's people, by faith, entrench themſelves,

and of it a believer ſaith, *Hic murus aheneus eſto*, this ſhall be my ſtrong-hold and fortreſs in the day of trouble. And well may we ſo eſteem and reckon it, if we conſider,

1. That wherever the ſpecial love of God goes, there the ſpecial preſence of God goes alſo, John xiv. 23. "He ſhall "be loved of my Father, and we will come unto him, and make "our abode with him." And O how ſecure and ſafe muſt thoſe be (however times govern) with whom God himſelf maketh his abode? For as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks, Pſal. xci. 1. "He that "dwells in the ſecret place of the Moſt High, ſhall abide under "the ſhadow of the Almighty." And he that is over-ſhadowed by an almighty power, need not fear how many mighty enemies combine againſt him.

2. Wherever the ſpecial love of God is placed, that perſon becomes precious and highly valuable in the eyes of God; he appretiates and eſtimates ſuch a man as his peculiar treaſure, which naturally and neceſſarily draws and ſpreads the wing of divine care over him for his protection, Deut. xxxiii. 12. "The "beloved of the Lord ſhall dwell in ſafety by him, and the Lord "ſhall cover him all the day long." Things of greateſt value are always kept in ſafeſt cuſtody.

3. Upon whomſoever the ſpecial love of God is ſet, there all events and iſſues of troubles are ſure to be over-ruled to the eternal advantage of that ſoul, Rom. viii. 28. Which conſideration alone is ſufficient to unſling all the troubles in the world, and make the beloved of the Lord ſhout and triumph in the midſt of tribulations.

But let us enter yet farther into this glorious chamber of divine love, and more particularly view the admirable properties thereof; though, when all is done, it will be found a love paſſing knowledge; our thoughts may admire, but can never meaſure it.

1. And firſt, you will find it an ancient love, whoſe ſpring is in eternity itſelf. Believer, God is thine ancient friend, who foreſaw and loved thee before thou, yea, before this world was in being; the fruits and effects thereof thou gathereſt in time, but the root that produces them was before all times, Prov. viii. 22, 23. "The Lord poſſeſſed me in the beginning of his way, "before his works of old. I was ſet up from everlaſting, from "the beginning, or ever the earth was." Thus was the love of God contriving, and providing the beſt of mercies in Chriſt for us; while, as yet, there were no ſuch creatures in the world, nor a world prepared to receive us.

2. The love of God to his people is a free, and altogether

undeſerved love. It muſt needs be ſo, ſeeing it preceded our very being; which had it not done, yet no motives had been found in us, to allure it to us more than others, Deut. vii. 7. "The Lord did not ſet his love upon you, nor chuſe "you, becauſe ye were more in number than any people (for "ye were the feweſt of all people) but becauſe the Lord loved "you." So that we cannot find one ſtone of our merit in the foundation of this love; for thoſe whom it embraces in its arms, are *immerentes, & male merentes*, ill-deſerving, as well as undeſerving. We were loved of God, before we were lovely in ourſelves; it is freely pitched upon us, not purchaſed by us, Iſa. xliii. 24.

3. The love of God to believers is a bountiful love, ſtreaming forth continually mercies both innumerable and invaluable to their ſouls and bodies, 2 Pet. i. 3. Chriſtian, it would quickly weary thine arm, yea, let me ſay, the arm of an angel, but to write down the thouſandth part of the mercies which have already flowed out of this precious fountain to thee; though all thou haſt received, or ſhalt receive in this world, are but the beginnings of mercy, and firſt-fruits of the love of God to thee; 'tis the love of God which daily loads thee with benefits, as the expreſſion is, Pſal. lxviii. 19. And if thou art daily loaded with mercies, what an heap of mercies will the mercies of thy whole life be?

4. The love of God to believers is a diſtinguiſhing love; not the portion of all, no, nor yet of many beſides thee, 1 Cor. i. 26. The generality of the world dwell in the room of common providence, not in the chamber of ſpecial love, into which God hath admitted thee: this conſideration ſhould make thee break out in admiration, as it is, John xix. 22. "Lord, how "is it that thou wilt manifeſt thyſelf to me, and not to the "world?"

5. The love of God to believers is a love tranſcendent to all creature-love; it moves in an higher ſphere than the love of any creature doth, Rom. v. 6, 7, 8. We read of Jacob's love to Rachel, which is ſo celebrated in the ſacred ſtory for the fervour of it; and yet all that it enabled him to ſuffer, was but the ſummer's heat and the winter's cold; a trifle to what the love of Chriſt engaged, and enabled him to ſuffer for thy ſake. We read alſo of the love of David to Abſalom, which made him wiſh, would God I had died for thee, O Abſalom, my ſon, my ſon! This love was only manifeſted in a wiſh, which, haply, might have been retracted to, had there been an exchange to be made indeed: but the life of Chriſt, worth millions of

his life, was actually and willingly staked down for thy soul. We read of the love of one disciple manifested to another disciple in a cup of cold water; but Christ hath manifested his love to thee in pouring out his warmest heart blood for thy redemption. O what a transcendent love is the divine love!

6. To conclude, (though alas, little is said of the love of God,) it is an everlasting and unchangeable love. Hills and mountains shall sooner start from their bases, than his loving-kindness depart from his people, Isa. liv. 10. Though he afflict us, still he loves us, Psal. lxxxix. 32, 33. Nay, though we grieve him, yet still he loves us, Mark xvi. 7. *Tell the disciples, and tell Peter.* Peter had grieved Christ, denied Christ, yet will he not renounce nor cast off Peter.

Sect. II. Well then, if God hath opened to your souls such a chamber of love, where your souls may be ravished with daily delights, as well as secured from danger and ruin; O that you would enter into it by faith, and dwell for ever in the love of God! I mean, clear up your interest in it, and then solace your souls in the delights of it. Need I to use an argument, or spend one motive to press you to enter into such an heaven upon earth? If the deadness of thy heart doth need it, take into consideration, reader, these few that follow.

Motive 1. Ponder with thyself how sad and miserable the case will be with thee in the days of calamity and distress, if the love of God shall then be clouded to thy soul. In those days, such as love thee, will either be absent from thee, or impotent to help thee; all thy friends and familiars may be removed far off, and whither then wilt thou turn, should God be far off too? This was that evil which Jeremiah so vehemently deprecated, chap. xvii. ver. 17. *Be not a terror unto me, thou art my hope in the day of evil; q. d.* O Lord, my soul depends upon refreshment and comfort from thee, when all the springs of earthly comfort are dried up. Shouldst thou be a terror to me in the day of evil, it will be the most terrible disappointment that ever befel my soul; if thou be kind, I care not who be cruel; if I have the love of God, I value not the hatred of men; but if God be a terror, who, or what can be a comforter? The love of God is the alone refuge to which the gracious soul retreats, upon all creature disappointments, and failings. This, therefore, is the main thing to be feared against the evil day.

Motive 2. The knowledge and assurance of the love of God is a mercy attainable by a gracious soul, notwithstanding the imperfections of grace. Peter had his falls and failings as well

as other Chriſtians, yet when Chriſt puts the queſtion home to him, John xxi. 15. "Simon, ſon of Jonas, loveſt thou me "more than theſe;" he was able to return a clear poſitive anſwer, "Yea, Lord, thou knoweſt that I love thee." Study thy heart, Chriſtian, and ſtudy the ſcriptures; if thou canſt find the ſincere love of God in thy heart, that ſcripture will clear the love of God to thy ſoul, John iv. 19. "We love him, "becauſe he firſt loved us." If thou lay thine hand upon a ſtone-wall, and feel it warm, thou mayeſt conclude the ſunbeams have ſhone upon it; for warmth is not naturally in dead ſtones. Our love to God is but a reflex beam of his love to us; and we know there can be no reflex without a direct beam. Thouſands of Chriſtians do, at this day, actually poſſeſs the raviſhing ſenſe of divine love, whoſe fears and complaints have been the ſame that thine now are; that God who indulged this favour to them, can do as much for thee.

Motive 3. Think how well thou wilt be provided for the worſt and difficulteſt times, when the love of God ſhall be well ſecured to thy ſoul; when the love of God, *i. e.* the ſenſe of his love, is once ſhed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghoſt, which for that end, among others, is given unto us; we ſhall then be able to glory in tribulation, Rom. v. 3, 5. We may then bid defiance to all the adverſe powers of hell and earth, and ſay, now do your worſt; we are out of your reach, and above all your terrors and affrights. Be adviſed then to fit cloſe to this work; clear but this point once, and the worſt is paſt. O lie at the feet of God night and day, give him no reſt, take no denial from him, fill thy mouth with pleas and arguments: Tell him, Lord, it is neither for corn, nor wine, that I ſeek thee, but only for thy love; beſtow thy other gifts upon whom thou wilt, only ſeal up thy love to my ſoul.

And laſtly, I adviſe thee, reader, to be exceeding careful, when God admits thee into the ſenſe of his love, to ſhut the door behind thee, leſt thy ſoul be ſoon expelled thence by the ſubtilty of Satan, who envies nothing more, than ſuch an happineſs as this: That envious ſpirit totally deſpairs of the leaſt drop of ſuch a mercy, and therefore ſwells with envy at thy enjoyment of it. But if ever thou faſten thy hand of faith upon this mercy, looſe not thy hold by every objection with which he will rap thy fingers.

1. If he object the many ſharp afflictions, and manifold rods of God upon thee, call not the love of God in queſtion for that; but remember what he ſaith, Heb. xii. 6. "Whom the "Lord loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every ſon whom

" he receiveth." Fatherly corrections are ſo far from being inconſiſtent with the love of God, that his love is rather queſtionable without them, than for them; they are love tokens, not marks of hatred.

2. Yield not up thy claim and title to the love of God, becauſe he ſometimes hides his face from thee; thou knoweſt the ſun is up, and going on in its regular courſe, in the darkeſt and cloſeſt day. *My God, my God*, ſaith Chriſt himſelf, *Why haſt thou forſaken me?* Believe he is ſtill thy God, and his love immutable, when the ſenſe and manifeſtations thereof do fail.

3. Call not the love of God in queſtion, becauſe of thy great vileneſs and unworthineſs. Say not, when thou moſt loatheſt thyſelf, God muſt needs loath thee too; he can love where thou loatheſt. " Return, return, O Shulamite, return, " return, that we may look upon thee: What will ye ſee in " the Shulamite? as it were the company of two armies." The ſpouſe was exceeding beautiful in the eyes of others, when moſt baſe and vile in her own: What would you ſee in the Shulamite? Alas, there is nothing in me, at the beſt, but conflicts and wars, betwixt grace and corruption, as it were betwixt two armies, Cant. vi. 13.

4. Quit not thy claim to the love of God, becauſe he ſeems to ſhut out thy prayers, and delays to anſwer thy long continued deſires and importunities of thy ſoul in ſome caſes. David would neither cenſure his God, no, nor call in queſtion his intereſt in him, becauſe of ſuch a delay and ſilence, Pſal. xxii. 1, 2. *My God, my God.* The claim is doubled, ver. 1. and yet in the next breath he ſaith, " I cry in the day-time, but thou " heareſt not; and in the night-ſeaſon, and am not ſilent."

Thus I have offered you ſome advice and aſſiſtance, how to ſecure yourſelves in theſe divine attributes, *viz.* The power, wiſdom, faithfulneſs, unchangeableneſs, care, and love of God, as in ſo many ſanctuaries, and comfortable refuges in the days of common calamity. It is noted, even of the Egyptians, when the ſtorm of hail was coming upon the land, Exod. ix. 20. " He that feared the word of the Lord among the ſervants of " Pharaoh, made his ſervants and his cattle flee into the " houſes." Let not an Egyptian take more care of his beaſts than Chriſtians of their ſouls. Stormy days are coming, God hath provided you a refuge, and given you ſeaſonable premonitions, and calls from heaven, to haſten into them before the times of deſolations come. The Lord help us to hear his calls, and comply with them, which will be as much our privilege, as it is

our duty. And so much for the fifth proposition, *viz.* That God's attributes, promises, and providences, are prepared for the security of his people in the greatest distresses that befal them in the world.

PROPOSITION VI.

That none but God's own people are taken into these chambers of security, or can expect his special protection in evil times.

Sect. I. THIS proposition describes and clears the qualified subject of this privilege. God's own people, and none but such, can warrantably claim special protection in evil times, and this is consonant to the current account of scripture, Isa. iii. 10, 11. "Say ye unto the righteous, it shall be "well with him. Wo to the wicked, it shall be ill with him." He speaks concerning the day of Jerusalem's ruin, and Judah's fall, as appears, ver. 8. So great a difference will God make, even in this world, betwixt the righteous and the wicked. In Nah i. you have also a terrible day described, wherein Bashan, Carmel, and Lebanon, the most pleasant and fruitful places of the land shall languish, ver. 4. The mountains shall quake, the hills melt, the earth, and those that dwell therein, burnt up, ver. 5. The indignation and fury of God poured out like fire, ver. 6. The privileged people in this terrible day are God's own people, they only are taken into security, ver. 7. The Lord is good, a strong-hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him, *i. e.* he so knoweth them, as to care and provide for them in that evil day; and so, throughout the whole scripture, you shall find the promises of protection still made to the people of God. When the Chaldean army, like a devouring fire, was ready to seize upon the land, the sinners in Sion were afraid, fearfulness surprized the hypocrites; for who among us (say they) shall dwell with devouring fire, and everlasting burnings? Yes, saith God, some there are that shall abide that day, *viz.* "He that walketh righteously, and speaketh up-"rightly; he shall dwell on high, his place of defence shall "be the munition of rocks;" *i. e.* God will be a sanctuary to them, when others shall be as stubble before the flames, Isa. xxxiii. 14, 15, 16.

But for the right stating of this proposition, three things must be heedfully regarded.

1. That all good men are not aways exempted from the stroke

of outward calamities. In that ſenſe the righteous may periſh, and merciful men be taken away; yea, they may periſh in love, and be taken away in mercy from the evil to come, Iſa. lvii. 1, 2. Micah vii. 1, 2.

2. That all wicked men are not always expoſed to external miſeries; but, "a juſt man may periſh in his righteouſneſs, and "a wicked man prolong his life in his wickedneſs," Eccleſ. vii. 15.

3. But in this ſenſe we are to underſtand the propoſition, That none but the people of God have right, by promiſe, to his ſpecial protection in evil days, that all ſuch ſhall either be preſerved from the ſtroke of calamities, or from the deadly ſting, namely eternal ruin, by them: though they ſhould fall by the hands of enemies, yet they die, as Joſiah did, in peace, 2 Kings xxii. 19, 20. If they be taken away, it is but out of the way of greater miſchiefs: Death doth but lay the ſaints in their beds of reſt, when it hurries away others into everlaſting miſeries: If they be not excuſed from troubles, yet their troubles are ſure to be ſanctified to their eternal good, Rom. viii. 28. And the Lord will be with them in their troubles, Pſal. xci. 15. Iſa. xli. 10.

Two things remain to be conſidered, before we finiſh this laſt propoſition: *viz.*

1. Who the people of God are?
2. Why this privilege is peculiar to them?

1. Who are the people of God? the ſcripture deſcribes them two ways: negatively, and poſitively. Negatively, in oppoſition to thoſe who are not the people of God, but are (1.) The ſervants of ſin, obeying it in the luſt of it, which the people of God neither are, nor dare to do, Rom. vi. 11, 12, *&c.* (2.) The men of this world, who have their portion in this life, ſavouring and minding the things of the world only; whereas the people of God are called out of the world, John xvii. 16. and principally ſtudy and labour after the higher concernments of the world to come, Rom. viii. 5. (3.) The vaſſals of Satan, doing his luſts, and in ſubjection to his power, Acts xxvi. 18. Eph. ii. 2. from which bondage the people of God are made free. (4) Nor yet are they their own, living wholly to themſelves, and ſeeking only their own ends, as others do, 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. Theſe, all theſe are not the people of God, God will not own them for ſuch; they but deceive themſelves in thinking, and calling themſelves ſo. But then poſitively, they are (1.) A people regenerated, and born again, John i. 13. Their regeneration

gives them both the eſſence and denomination of the people of God: It is as impoſſible to be the children of God, without regeneration, as it is to be the children of men without generation. (2.) They are a people in covenant with God, Ezek. xvi. 8. "I "entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becameſt mine." For in this covenant they give themſelves to the Lord, 2 Cor. viii. 5. They avouch the Lord to be their God, and make over themſelves to him to be his people, Jer. xxxi. 33. devoting unto God all that they are, their ſouls and bodies, with every faculty and member incluſively, Rom. xii. 1. Luke x. 27. All that they have, Rom. xi. 36. all is dedicated and devoted to the Lord's uſe and ſervice, and theſe only are the people of God.

2. The laſt thing to be cleared is, Why the people of God, and none beſide them, have this peculiar privilege of an hiding-place in the day of trouble? and the grounds of it are,

1. Becauſe they only have ſpecial intereſt in God, and propriety is the ground on which they claim and expect protection: I am thine, ſave me, Pſal. cxix. 94. Upon this very ground it was, that David encouraged himſelf in one of his greateſt plunges and diſtreſſes of his whole life, 1 Sam. xxx. 6. "But David "encouraged himſelf in the Lord his God."

2. The people of God only are at peace with God; and where there is no peace, there can be no protection: The harbours and garriſons of one kingdom never receive into their protection the ſubjects of another kingdom, that are in open hoſtility againſt them. Now there is open war betwixt God and the wicked, Pſal. vii. 11. Zech. xi. 8. 'Till they have peace with God, they can claim no protection from God.

3. The promiſes of protection are made only to God's people; and where there is no promiſe, there can be no warrantable claim to protection, 2 Cor. i. 20. 2 Pet. i. 4. Common providence may ſhelter them for a time, but the ſaints only have the keys of the promiſes, which open the chambers or attributes of God to them.

4. None but the people of God walk in the ways of God, and none but thoſe that walk in his way can, groundedly, expect his protection; for ſo runs the promiſe, 2 Chron. xv. 2. "I am with you, whilſt you are with me," *i. e.* I am with you, by way of protection, direction, ſupport, and ſalvation, whilſt you are with me in the duties of obedience, and exerciſes of your graces; ſee that you love, fear and obey me, and then, depend upon it, I will look after, and take care of you.

5. To conclude, The people of God only flee to God for ſanctuary, and caſt themſelves upon him for protection, Pſal.

lvi. 3. "At what time I am afraid, I will truſt in thee." Pſal. xviii. 2. "The Lord is my rock, and my fortreſs, and my de-"liverer; my God, my ſtrength, in whom I will truſt, my "buckler, and the horn of my ſalvation, and my high tower." This their confidence in God, and reliance upon him, engages him to protect them in their dangers, Iſa. xxvi. 3. All others put themſelves out of God's protection, by making fleſh their arm, and ſo giving the honour of God to the creature, Jer. xvii. 5. And thus much for clearing this laſt propoſition alſo. All that remains, will be diſpatched in a brief and cloſe application of the point thus opened and confirmed.

CHAP. XII.

Containing the firſt uſe of the point, in ſeveral informing conſectaries *and* deductions *of truth from it.*

SECT. I.

Conſect. 1. FROM the whole of this diſcourſe, we may be informed what a miſerable and ſhiftleſs people all thoſe will be, in times of trouble, who have no ſpecial intereſt in God, or the promiſes. Sad and lamentable was the caſe of Saul, as it is by himſelf expreſſed, 1 Sam. xxviii. 15. "I am "ſore diſtreſſed, for the Philiſtines make war againſt me, and "God is departed from me, and anſwereth me no more." It is a wonderful and unaccountable thing, how carnal men and women ſubſiſt and bear up, when their earthly props and hopes ſink under and fail them; ſo long as any creature comfort is left, thither they will retreat for relief and ſuccour: but if all fail, as quickly they may, whither will they turn for comfort, having not a God nor a promiſe to flee to? which the people of God can do, when all things elſe fail them, Heb. iii. 17. Their different conditions in the day of trouble, is clearly expreſſed in Zeph. ii. 3, 4. "Seek ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, "which have wrought his judgment, ſeek righteouſneſs, ſeek "meekneſs, it may be ye ſhall be hid in the day of the Lord's "anger." There is God's *may-be*, which is better ſecurity than man's *ſhall-be*, for their temporal deliverance: But what ſhall become of others, that have no refuge but in the creature? Why, the miſery and ſhiftleſneſs of their condition follows in the next words: "Gaza ſhall be forſaken, and Aſhkelon a de-"ſolation; they ſhall drive out Aſhdod at noon-day, and Ekron "ſhall be rooted up;" *i. e.* All their earthly ſecurities ſhall

fail them; their ſtrong-holds ſhall not ſecure them; they ſhall find no ſhelter in the ſcorching heat of the day of trouble. Moab, Aſhdod and Ekron have no more benefit by the promiſes made to Zion, than the inhabitants of Rome can claim by the charter of London. If a wicked or hypocritical perſon cry to God in his diſtreſs, he will not hear him, Prov. i. 25, 26. Job xxvii. 9. but will bid him go to his earthly refuges which he hath choſen. If he go to the promiſes, knock at thoſe doors of hope, they cannot relieve him, being all made in Chriſt to believers; if to the name and attributes of God, all the doors are ſhut againſt them, Pſal. xxxiv. 16. There are ſeven dreadful aggravations of a wicked man's troubles.

(1.) When troubles come upon him, the curſe of God follows him into his carnal refuges; Jer. xvii. 5. "Curſed be the "man that truſteth in man, and maketh fleſh his arm, and "whoſe heart departeth from the Lord." Trouble is the arrow, and this curſe the venom of the arrow, which makes the wound incurable.

(2.) When troubles fall upon him from without, a guilty conſcience will terrify him from within; ſo that the mind can give no relief to the body, but both ſink under their own weights. It is not ſo with the people of God, they have inward relief under outward preſſures, 2 Cor. iv. 16.

(3.) The guſts and ſtorms of wicked mens troubles may blow them into hell, and hurry them into eternal deſtruction: if death march towards them upon the pale horſe, hell always follows him, Rev. vi. 8.

(4.) If troubles and diſtreſſes overwhelm their hearts, they can give them no vent or eaſe by prayer, faith, and reſignation to God, as his people uſes to do, 1 Sam. i. 18.

(5.) When their troubles and diſtreſſes come, then comes the hour and power of their temptation; and, to ſhun ſorrow, they will fall into ſin, having no promiſe to be kept in the hour of temptation, as the ſaints have, Rev. iii. 10.

(6.) When their troubles come, they will be left alone in the midſt of them: theſe are their burdens, and they alone muſt bear them. God's gracious, comfortable, ſupporting preſence is only with his own people.

(7.) If trouble or death come upon them as a ſtorm, they have no anchor of hope to drop in the ſtorm; *the wicked is driven away in his wickedneſs; but the righteous hath hope in his death*, Prov. xiv. 32. By all which it appears, that a chriſtleſs perſon is a moſt helpleſs and ſhiftleſs creature in the day of trouble.

Coniect. 2. Secondly, Hence it follows, *That Chriſtians ought not to droop like other men in the day of trouble.* A wicked man's boldneſs, and a Chriſtian's cowardlineſs, in times of affliction, are alike ungrounded and uncomely. Why ſhould thy heart, Chriſtian, deſpond and ſink at this rate, upon the proſpect of approaching troubles? Are there not ſafe and comfortable chambers taken up, and provided for thee againſt that day? Is not the name of the Lord a ſtrong tower, into which thou mayeſt run and be ſafe? The heart of a good man, ſaith Chryſoſtom, ſhould at all times be like the higher heavens, ſerene, tranquil, and clear, whatever thunders and lightenings, ſtorms and tempeſts trouble and terrify the lower world. If a man have a good roof over his head, where he can ſit dry and warm, what need he trouble himſelf to hear the winds roar, ſee the lightenings flaſh, and the rains pour down without doors? Why, this is thy privilege, Chriſtian; "A man (to wit the man Chriſt "Jeſus) ſhall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a co-"vert from the tempeſt; as rivers of water in a dry place, as "the ſhadow of a great rock in a weary land," Iſa. xxxii. 2. Art thou in Chriſt, and in the covenant? give me then one good reaſon for thy dejections in a day of trouble; or if thou haſt none to give, hearken to theſe reaſons againſt it.

1. If thou be in Chriſt, thy ſins are forgiven thee; and why ſhould not a pardoned ſoul be a chearful ſoul in adverſity? Afflictions may buz and hum about thee, like bees that have loſt their ſting, but they can never hurt thee.

2. If thou be in Chriſt, thy God is with thee in all thy troubles; and how can thy heart ſink or faint in ſuch a preſence? Let them that are alone in troubles fail under them: but do not thou do ſo, that art ſurrounded with Almighty power, grace, and love, Iſa. xliii. 1, 2.

3. If thou be in Chriſt, thy greateſt afflictions ſhall prove thy beſt friends and benefactors, Rom. viii. 28. Sure then thou art more afraid than hurt; thou miſtakeſt thy beſt friends for thy worſt enemies; thou and thy afflictions ſhall part more comfortably than you met.

4. If thou be in Chriſt, thy treaſure is ſafe, thy eternal happineſs is out of the reach of all thine enemies, Luke xii 4. Luke x. 42. And if that be ſafe, thou haſt no cauſe to be ſad; to droop and tremble at the hazard of earthly comforts, whilſt heavenly and eternal things are ſafe, is as if a man that had gotten his pardon from the king, and had it ſafe in his boſom, ſhould be found weeping upon the way home, becauſe he hath loſt his ſtaff or glove. Theſe reaſons are ſtrong againſt the

dejections of God's people under outward troubles; but yet I am ſenſible that all the reaſoning in the world will not prevent their dejections, except they will take pains to clear up their intereſt in God, againſt ſuch a day, Pſal. xviii. 2. and will act their faith by way of adherence and dependence upon God, in the want of former light and evidence, Iſa. l. 10. And laſtly, that they keep their conſciences pure and inviolate, which will be a ſpring of comfort in the midſt of troubles, 2 Cor. i. 12.

3. *Conſect.* Thirdly, *It hence appears to be the greateſt folly and vanity in the world, to make any thing but God our refuge in the day of trouble.* This practice, as you heard but now, is under God's curſe; and that which is curſed of God can never be comfortable to us. It is an honour peculiar to God, the right of heaven, and therefore curſed ſacrilege to beſtow it on the creature. We read of ſome that make lies their refuge, and hide themſelves under falſhood, thinking when the overflowing ſcourge comes, it ſhall not come nigh unto them, Iſa. xxviii. 15. They will truſt to their wits and policies, they will fawn and flatter, lie and diſſemble, caſt themſelves into a thouſand ſhapes and forms to ſave themſelves; but all in vain; the flood ſhall ſweep away their refuge of lies. Others make riches their truſt and confidence, Prov. x. 15. "The rich man's wealth is his "ſtrong city." If enemies come, their money ſhall be their ranſom: But oh! what a poor refuge will this be! it may betray, but cannot ſecure them. "Behold, ſaith God, I will ſtir "up the Medes againſt them, which ſhall not regard ſilver; "and as for gold, they ſhall not delight in it," Iſa. xiii. 17. Riches profit not in the day of wrath, Prov. xi. 4. Job bleſſed God in the day of his adverſity, that he had not made gold his hope or the fine gold his confidence, Job xxxi. 24. Bleſs not thou thyſelf, that thou haſt ſuch things to beſtow thy hope and truſt upon. Others make men their refuge, eſpecially great and powerful men: But to how little purpoſe is it! "Put not "your truſt in princes, nor in the ſon of man, in whom there is "no help," Pſal. cxlvi. 3, 4. They cannot keep their crowns upon their heads; no, nor their heads upon their ſhoulders; the greateſt men are but duſt, and what can duſt do to duſt? Three things aggravate their miſery, who miſplace their confidence, by beſtowing it on any creature. (1.) That creature will certainly deceive them; men are deceitful men, Pſal. lxii. 9. Riches are deceitful riches, 1 Tim. vi. 17. Every thing you lean on beſide God will ſtart aſide like a deceitful bow, Pſal. lxxviii. 57. (2.) The diſappointment of your hopes from the creature will enflame

your affliction, and greatly aggravate your ſorrow, 2 Kings xviii. 21. The broken reeds of Egypt will not only fail, but pierce you. (3.) In a word, God will take none into his protection, who make any thing beſides himſelf their hope and confidence; if we fly from God to the creature, God will ſay, To the creature thou ſhalt go; except I have thy dependence, thou ſhalt never have my protection; where I have no honour, thou ſhalt have no comfort.

Conſect. 4. Fourthly, The former diſcourſe yields us alſo this comfortable concluſion, *That whatever confuſions, deſolations and troubles be in the earth, the church and people of God can never be wholly exterminated and deſtroyed, ſeeing ſuch a ſecure refuge is prepared for them of God*, Pſal. cii. 28. "The children of thy "ſervants ſhall continue, and their ſeed ſhall be eſtabliſhed be-"fore thee." Which is aſſigned as the true reaſon of its perpetuity and ſafety, Pſal. xlviii. 3. "God is known in her palaces for a "refuge." The church's enemies have tried the utmoſt of their policies and powers in all ages againſt it, but to no purpoſe: whilſt they have been plotting and perſecuting, the preſerved remnant have been ſinging their ſong upon Alamoth, even praiſes to their great preſerver; tho' they have no external, viſible defence, yet are they as ſafe as ſalvation itſelf can make them, "for ſalvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks," Iſa. xxvi. 1, 2. Four things are exceeding remarkable in the church's preſervation: (1.) No people were ever ſo fiercely oppoſed by the powers of this world, "The kings of the earth have ſet "themſelves, and the rulers have taken counſel together," Pſal. ii. 2. All methods and artifices have been tried, ſometimes to jeer and ſcoff them out of their religion, ſo did the apoſtate Julian; and ſometimes by cruel tortures to affright them from their religion; the variety, and more than barbarous inhumanity whereof the church-hiſtories give us a ſad and amazing account. (2.) Under theſe cruel perſecutions they have ſeemed to be utterly loſt, to the eye of ſenſe and reaſon; "I am left alone, "ſaid Elijah, and they ſeek my life," 1 Kings xix. 10. "By "whom, Lord, ſhall Jacob ariſe, ſaid Amos, for he is very "ſmall?" Amos vii. 2. (3.) Notwithſtanding all which, the church hath out-lived all its dangers; it is the true *Phoenix* which hath out-lived the deluge. (4.) Such deliverances are proper and peculiar to the church alone; no people, beſides the people of God, have ſuch ſalvations upon record. The great and famous monarchies of the world have daſhed one another

to pieces, like earthen potſheards *. And all this by virtue of that promiſe, Jer. xxx. 11. "For I am with thee, ſaith the "Lord, to ſave thee; tho' I make a full end of all nations whither "I have ſcattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee."

Conſect. 5. Fifthly, to conclude; if this be ſo, *then it is a deep and dangerous policy of Satan to ſhut up our refuge in God againſt us, as much as may be, in times of trouble.* Satan, like a cunning fowler, deſpairs of getting the birds in his net, except he can beat them out of their coverts; it is therefore his great deſign, to eſtrange and alienate the ſaints from their God, as much as he can, thereby to cut off their retreat to him in times of trouble; a miſchief which the people of God have always vehemently deprecated, Pſal. cii. 2. Jer. xvii. 17. and oh that we would beware of it, and ſhun this miſchief, by our ſeaſonable preventing watchfulneſs. There are, among others, three ſpecial projects of Satan, whereby he manages this miſchievous deſign againſt the people of God.

1. By drawing their conſciences under guilt, on purpoſe to deſtroy the liberty, freedom, and child-like confidence of their ſouls, in their addreſſes to God. This, if any thing in the world, will do it, Job xi. 14, 15. What a loſs will that poor ſoul be at, in times of trouble, whoſe grumbling and condemning conſcience will not ſuffer him to look up chearfully and believingly in the face of its God and Father, having loſt its ancient freedom at the throne of grace?

2. By prevailing with them to neglect and intermit the courſe of their daily duties, and thereby to let down their communion with God, and, in a great meaſure, loſe their acquaintance with him. This is a dangerous policy of the devil, and an unſpeakable prejudice to the ſoul. Oh Chriſtian! take heed of a lazy, ſlothful ſpirit; or a vain and earthly heart, which will eaſily ſuffer the duties of religion to be joſtled aſide and put by for every trivial occaſion; eſpecially beware of ſlight, formal, and dead-hearted performances of duty, which is little better than the intermiſſion of them; it may, indeed, prevent the ſcandal, but can never give thee the comfort of religion.

3. By beclouding their intereſt in God, and darkening their titles and evidences, by thick clouds of doubts and fears. This is the ſad caſe of many a poor Chriſtian in a day of trouble;

* ——— *Sic Medus ademit*
Aſſyrio, Syroque tulit moderamina Perſes.
Aſſyria's empire thus the Mede did ſhake,
The Perſian next the pride of Medea brake.

without are fightings, and within are fears. Brethren, I beseech you, think often what those things are, which usually put men into such frights and straits, when imminent dangers stare them in the face; what it is that daunts and damps the hearts of Christians at such times; and as you value the peace and freedom of your souls with God, give not matter for your consciences to reproach you of miss-spent time, indulged sins, neglected duties, formality or hypocrisy in duties, sinister and by-ends in your transactions with God or man: preserve the purity and peace of your consciences, as you would preserve your two eyes; if by such wiles the devil cannot bar you from your God, or shut up your refuge in him, your outward troubles can do you no hurt.

The second use, of direction and advice.

Sect. II. The providences of God, in these days, giving us such loud warnings of approaching judgment: how are all that are wise in heart, and understanding of the times, now more especially concerned to clear their interest in these blessed attributes of God, which have here been opened, as their only refuge in the evil day. Let me therefore persuade and press you to betake yourselves to God, your refuge and strong-hold in trouble, and that more especially in these two great duties, *viz.*

1. Of fervent supplication.
2. Of universal resignation.

1. Betake yourselves to God by fervent prayer and supplication. Let me say of these times, as holy Mr. Perkins did of his *; "These are no times for Christians to contend and strive "one with another, but with their united cries to strive with "God;" and among other requests, strongly to enforce and follow home that of David, Psal. lxxi. 2, 3. "Deliver me in thy "righteousness, and cause me to escape; incline thine ear unto "me, and save me; be thou my strong habitation, whereunto "I may continually resort." That is a true and weighty observation of Austin †, "A refuge is not to be found in trouble, "except it be provided before-hand in peace." "For this, "(saith the Psalmist,) shall every one that is godly pray unto "thee, in a time when thou mayest be found; surely in the "floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him," Psal. xxxii. 6. Had not Noah prepared and secured himself in

* *Non sunt ista litigandi, sed orandi tempora.*

† *Non facile inveniuntur præsidia in adversitate, quæ non fuerint in pace quæsita.*

the ark, before the floods of great waters came, he had not lie, as he did, *mediis tranquillus in undis*; ſleeping quietly, when others were periſhing in the waters. Gather yourſelves therefore together, before the decree bring forth; ſeek the Lord, all ye meek of the earth: be more frequent, and more fervent in prayer, now than ever; you have all the encouragements in the world to incite you to this duty: the nature of your God is exceeding pitiful, tender, and compaſſionate, Jam. v. 11. The endeared relations betwixt God and you give ſingular encouragement of ſucceſs: ſhall not God hear his own elect, which cry unto him day and night? Luke xviii. 7. The ſweet returns and anſwers of former prayers are ſo many motives and encouragements to follow cloſe that profitable duty, Pſal. li. 1, 2, 3. And above all, your prevalent advocate in the heavens ſhould encourage you to come frequently and boldly to the throne of grace, "that you may obtain mercy, and find grace to help "in the time of need," Heb. iv. 16. In two things I ſhall briefly offer a few directions here, *viz.*

1. As to the matter
2. As to the manner } of prayer.

1. As to the matter of prayer, I mean ſuch as the ſtate and condition of the times, now more eſpecially, ſuggeſts.

(1.) Unite your prayers, and cry mightily to the Lord, that if it be his good pleaſure, this cup of wrath, which ſeems to be mingled and prepared, may paſs from his people. Now cry to God, as they are directed to do, Joel ii. 17. "Spare thy people, "O Lord, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the "heathen ſhould rule over them, wherefore ſhould they ſay a-"mong the people, Where is their God?" O pray, that England may not be delivered into the hands of blood-thirſty Papiſts, that the golden candleſtic may not be removed, that idolatry may not return into theſe places where God hath been ſo ſweetly worſhipped; that a land ſo peculiarly bleſſed with goſpel-light, wherein ſo many thouſand ſons and daughters have been born to God, may not, at laſt, become an Aceldama, a great ſhambles, to quarter out the limbs of his dear ſaints; that the pleaſant plant of reformation, planted with his own right-hand, and watered with ſo many tears, yea, with ſo much blood, may not, at laſt, be rooted up by the wild boar of the foreſt!

(2.) Pray indefinently, that you may be kept from the ſins and temptations of the times. *O watch and pray, that you enter not into temptation*; if you cannot prevail with God to turn away his anger, yet be importunate with him that you may be

kept from ſin; that if you loſe your outward peace, you may be able to keep inward peace; that you may never ſacrifice your conſciences, to ſave your fleſh; that you may never fall under the diſpleaſure of God, to avoid the rage of men. Ah *friends!* we little think what a fearful havoc an hour of temptation will make in ſuch a profeſſing nation as this is; then ſhall many be offended, Matth. xxiv. 10. O pray, that you may never give offence to others, by ſcandal; or take offence yourſelves at the ways of God, whatever ſufferings and ſharp trials ſhall come.

(3.) Pray earneſtly for the ſanctification of all your troubles to your eternal good; an unſanctified comfort never did any man good, and a ſanctified trouble never did any man hurt; be more earneſt therefore with God, rather to have your troubles ſanctified, than prevented; to get the bleſſing, than to avoid the ſmart of them; if they cannot be turned away from you, pray they may be turned to your ſalvation.

2. Betake yourſelves to God, your refuge, by faith, reſigning and committing all into his hands, "Now the juſt ſhall live "by faith," Heb. x. 38. The more you can truſt God, the more you ſecure yourſelves from danger; he that can live by faith, ſhall never die by fear; and be ſure to inform yourſelves well in two things, *viz.*

1. What it is to truſt God over all.

2. What grounds you have ſo to do.

1. Be well inſtructed in the nature of this duty; there are ſix things imported in ſuch acts of reſignation.

1. An awakened ſenſe of our dangers and hazards. "At "what time I am afraid, I will truſt in thee," Pſal. lvi. 3. Suffering times are reſigning times, 1 Pet. iv. 19. "Let them "that ſuffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping "of their ſouls, to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator." And the greater and nearer our dangers are, the more frequent and vigorous ſhould the actings of our faith, this way, be: Be not far from me, for trouble is near.

2. Reſignation to God, neceſſarily implies our renunciation and diſclaiming of all other refuges. "Aſſur ſhall not ſave us, "we will not ride upon horſes, neither will we ſay any more "to the work of our hands, ye are our Gods, for in thee the "fatherleſs findeth mercy," Hoſ. xiv. 3. He that relies upon God, muſt ceaſe from man; reſignation to God excludes not the uſe of lawful means, but it doth exclude dependance upon them.

3. Reſignation to God is always grounded upon an intereſt in

God; we have no warrant, nor encouragement to expect protection from him in time of trouble, except we can come to him as children to a father: It is the filial relation that gives encouragement to this fiducial resignation; and the clearer that relation and interest is, the more bold and confident those acts of faith will be; Psal. lxxxvi. 2. "Preserve my soul, for I am "holy: O thou, my God, save thy servant that trusteth in "thee." And again, Psal. cxix. 94. "I am thine, save "me." I speak not here of the first act of faith, which flows not from an interest, but gives the soul an interest in God. Nor do I say, that poor, doubting, and timorous believers, whose interest in him is dark and dubious, have no warrant to resign themselves and their concernments into his hands; for it is both their right and duty to do it: but certainly the clearer our interest is, the more facile and comfortable will those acts be.

4. The committing acts of faith, imply a full acknowledgment and owning of God's power to protect us, be the danger never so imminent; Psal. xxxi. 15. "My times are in thy "hand, deliver me from the hands of mine enemies, and from "them that persecute me;" *q. d.* O Lord, I am fully satisfied my life is not at the disposal of mine enemies; 'tis not in their hands, but in thine; all the traps and snares they lay for it shall not shorten one minute of my time; I know thine hand is fully able to protect me, and therefore into thine hands I resign myself and all I have.

5. Resignation involves in it an expectation of help and safety from God, when we see no way of security from men. "O "Lord, saith Jehoshaphat, We have no might, nor strength, "neither know we what to do, but our eyes are unto thee," 2 Chron. xx. 12. So David, Psal. lxii. 5, 6. "My soul, wait "thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him: he "only is my rock and my salvation; he is my defence; I shall "not be moved."

6. Resignation to God implies the leaving of ourselves, and our concernments with him, to be disposed of according to his good pleasure; the resigning soul desires the Lord to do with him what he will, and is content to take what lot divine pleasure shall cast for him: 2 Sam. xv. 25. "And the king said unto "Zadok, carry back the ark of God into the city; if I shall find "favour in the eyes of the Lord, he will bring me again, and "shew me both it and his habitation; but if he thus say, I "have no delight in thee, behold, here am I, let him do to me

" ſeemeth good unto him." And ſo much of the nature of this duty, that we may underſtand what to do.

2. Next let me ſhew you, what encouragements you that are the people of God have to this duty, and they will appear to be great and many.

1. The ſovereignty and abſolute dominion of God over all creatures, is a ſingular encouragement to commit ourſelves into his hands, and truſt him over all, Pſal. lix. 9. " Becauſe of " his ſtrength will I wait upon thee; for God is my defence." If a man were in danger amidſt a great army of rude and inſolent ſoldiers, and were to put himſelf under the protection of any one, it would be his wiſdom to chuſe to do it under the general, who had all the ſoldiers of his army at his beck. Chriſtian, thy God, into whoſe hands thou committeſt thyſelf, is Lord-general of all the hoſts and armies in heaven and earth; how ſafe muſt thou then be in his hands?

2. The unſearchable and perfect wiſdom of God is a mighty encouragement to commit ourſelves into his hands; *With him is plenteous redemption*, Pſal. cxxx. *ult. i. e.* Choice and variety of ways and methods to ſave his people; we are, but God never is, at a loſs to find a door for our eſcape, 2 Pet. ii. 9. " The " Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation."

3. The infinite tenderneſs and compaſſionateneſs of our God, is a ſweet encouragement to reſign and commit ourſelves, and all we have, into his hands; his mercy is incomparably tender towards his people, infinitely beyond whatever any creature felt ſtirring in its own bowels, towards another that came out of its bowels, Iſa. xlix. 15. This compaſſion of God engageth the two fore-mentioned attributes, *viz.* his power and wiſdom, for the preſervation and relief of his people, as often as diſtreſſes befal them. Yea,

4. The very diſtreſſes his people are in, do, as it were, awake the almighty power of God for their defence and reſcue; our diſtreſſes are not only proper ſeaſons, but powerful motives to his ſaving power. Deut. xxxii. 36. " For the Lord ſhall " judge his people, and repent himſelf for his ſervants, when " he ſeeth that their power is gone, and there is none ſhut up " or left." God makes it an argument to himſelf, and his people plead it as an argument with him, " be not far from " me, for trouble is near, for there is none to help."

5. We have already committed greater and weightier concernments into his hand than the deareſt intereſt we have in this world; we have intruſted our ſouls with him, 1 Pet. iv. 19. 2 Tim. i. 12. Well therefore may we commit the leſſer, who

have intruſted the greater with him: What are our lives, liberties, eſtates, and relations, compared with our ſouls, and the eternal ſafety and happineſs of them!

6. The committing act of faith is the great and only expedient to procure and ſecure the peace and tranquillity of our minds, amidſt all the diſtractions and troubles of the preſent world; the greateſt part of our affliction and trouble, in ſuch days, is from the working of our own thoughts; theſe torments from within, are worſe than any from without; and the reſignation of all to God, by faith, is their beſt and only cure, Prov. xvi. 3. "Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy "thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed." A bleſſed calmneſs of mind, a ſweet tranquillity and ſettlement of thoughts, follows immediately hereupon, Pſal. xciv. 19. Oh then leave all with God, and quietly expect a comfortable iſſue: and for the better ſettlement and ſecurity of thy peace, in times of diſtraction and trouble, I beſeech thee, reader, carefully to watch and guard againſt theſe two evils.

Caution 1. Beware of infidelity and diſtruſtfulneſs of God, and his promiſes, which ſecretly lurks in thy heart, and is very apt to bewray itſelf, when great diſtreſſes and troubles befal thee. Thou wilt know it by ſuch ſymptoms as theſe: 1. In an over-haſty and eager deſire after preſent deliverance, Iſa. li. 14. "The captive exile haſteneth that he may be looſed, and "that he ſhould not die in the pit, nor that his bread ſhould "fail." The leſs faith, always the more impatience; and the more ability to believe, the more patience to wait. 2. It will diſcover itſelf in our readineſs to cloſe with and catch at ſinful mediums and methods of deliverance, Iſa. xxx. 15, 16. And this is the handle of temptation, and occaſion of apoſtacy. *But he that believeth will not make haſte*, Iſa. xxvi. 18. No more haſte than good ſpeed. 3. It will ſhew itſelf in diſtracting cares and fears about events, which will rack the mind with various and endleſs tortures.

Caution 2. Beware of dejection and deſpondency of mind in evil times; take heed of a poor low ſpirit, that will preſently ſink, and give up its hope upon every appearance and face of trouble; it is a promiſe made unto the righteous, Pſal. cxii. 7. "He ſhall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is "fixed, truſting in the Lord." The truſting of God fixes the heart, and the fixing of the heart fortifies it againſt fear: But I know what many poor Chriſtians will ſay in this caſe, their timorouſneſs and deſpondency ariſe not ſo much from the greatneſs of outward evils, as from the darkneſs and doubtfulneſs of

their ſpiritual and inward condition, which, doubtleſs, is the very truth of the caſe; which brings me to the laſt uſe of this point.

Uſe the third.

Search and examine your hearts, Chriſtians, whether thoſe graces and qualifications, to which God hath promiſed protection in evil times, may not be found upon an impartial ſearch in your hearts; amongſt which, I will ſingle out three principal ones, as the proper matters of your ſelf-examination, *viz.*

1. Uprightneſs of heart and way.
2. Humiliation for your own and others ſins.
3. Righteouſneſs in doing, and meekneſs in ſuffering the will of God.

1. Uprightneſs and integrity of heart and way. To this qualification belong many ſweet promiſes of protection; ſuch is that, Prov. ii. 7. "He is a buckler to them that walk uprightly," Pſal. vii. 10. "My defence is of God, which ſaveth the upright "in heart." If your hearts be true to God, theſe promiſes ſhall be truly performed to you; but beware you deceive not yourſelves in ſo great a point as this is. Thy heart cannot be an upright heart, except, (1.) It be a renewed heart; the natural heart is always a falſe heart; it is only regeneration that gives the heart a right temper and frame; all the duties and labours in the world can never keep the heart right in its courſe, which is not firſt ſet right for God, by a principle of renovation. (2.) We cannot judge ourſelves upright, except uprightneſs be the ſettled frame and ſtanding bent of our hearts, Pſal. cxix. 112, 117. It is not our integrity in one or two ſingle actions, but in the general courſe, and complex frame of our lives and ways, that will prove our integrity to God. (3.) Then may we reckon ourſelves upright, when the dread and awe of God's all-ſeeing eye keeps our hearts and ſteps from turning aſide to iniquity, Gen. xxxix. 9. 2 Chron. ii. 17. That is a ſincere and upright heart indeed, that finds itſelf at all times, and in all places, over-awed from ſin, by the eye of God upon him. (4.) That man's heart alſo is upright with God, who purely aims at, and deſigns the glory of God, as the ſcope and end of his life and actions, who lives not up to himſelf, neither acts ultimately and principally for himſelf, but lives to God, as a perſon dedicated and devoted to him, Rom. xiv. 7. (5.) That heart alſo is upright with God, which governs itſelf, and its ways, by the directions and rules of the word, Pſal. cxix. 11, 24, 133. Happy is that ſoul that finds ſuch evidences of

integrity in itſelf, when it is brought to the trial of it at the bar of the word, Heb. iv. 12. at the bar of conſcience, 2 Cor. i. 12. at the bar of affliction, Pſal. cxix. 87. and at the bar of ſtrong temptations, Gen. xxxix. 9. The eyes of the Lord ſhall run to and fro through the whole earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in the behalf of ſuch whoſe hearts are thus perfect towards him.

2. Another gracious qualification, intitling the ſoul to God's ſpecial protection in the worſt and moſt dangerous times, is the true humiliation for our own and other mens ſins: "Go, ſet a "mark, ſaith God, upon the foreheads of the men that ſigh "and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midſt "thereof," Ezek. ix. 4. Theſe that thus mourn, when others laugh, ſhall laugh when others mourn. Lot was the only mourner in Sodom, and he was the only perſon exempted from deſtruction in the ruin and overthrow thereof, 2 Pet. ii. 7. That is a ſweet and bleſſed privilege mentioned in Iſa. lxvi. 10. "Rejoice ye with Jeruſalem, and be glad with her, all ye that "love her; rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for "her; that ye may ſuck and be ſatisfied with the breaſts of her "conſolations, that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the "abundance of her glory." Be contented, Chriſtians, to bear your part in Sion's groans and ſorrows; you may live to bear your part in her triumphs and ſongs of deliverance: It is an argument of the true publicneſs and tenderneſs of your ſpirits for preſent, and as ſweet a ſign as can appear upon your ſouls, that you are reſerved for better days.

3. Righteouſneſs in doing, and meekneſs in ſuffering the will of God, is another mark or note, diſtinguiſhing and deſcribing thoſe perſons whom God will preſerve in the evil day. You have both theſe together in Zeph. ii. 3. "Seek ye the Lord, all "ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his judgments, "ſeek righteouſneſs, ſeek meekneſs: it may be ye ſhall be hid "in the day of the Lord's anger." The eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers, 1 Pet. iii. 12 If righteouſneſs brings you into ſtanger, the righteous God will take care of you in that danger, and bring you out of it. Oh! It is a ſingular comfort, when a man can ſay, It was not my ſin, but my duty, that brought me into trouble; this affliction met me in the path and way of my duty; it is for thy ſake, O Lord, that I am in trouble; as the martyr that held up the bible at the ſtake, ſaying, *This hath brought me hither.*

To conclude: Manage all your ſuffetings for Chriſt, with chriſtian meekneſs: As righteouſneſs muſt bring you into them,

so meekness must carry you through them; if you avenge yourselves, you take the cause out of God's hand into your own; but the meek Christian leaves it to the Lord, and shall never have cause to repent of his so doing. If thou have an upright heart with God, a tender and mournful heart for sin, and thou suffer with meekness for righteousness-sake, thou art one of those souls to whom that sweet voice is directed in my text,

Come my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself, as it were, for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.

* *

ΠΑΑΝΗΔΟΓΙΑ.

A succinct and seasonable Discourse of the Occasions, Causes, Nature, Rise, Growth, and Remedies of MENTAL-ERRORS.

THE reverend author of the ensuing treatises, having in them, explained and defended several gospel-truths, unto which divers things, in the writings of the reverend Dr. Crisp, deceased, do seem very opposite; whereas some of us, who subscribed a paper, the design whereof was only to testify, that we believed certain writings of the doctor's *never before published*, were faithfully transcribed by his son, the publisher of them; which paper is now, by the bookseller, prefixed to the whole volume; containing a large preface, which we never saw till after the publication, together with all the doctor's former works that were *published many years before*; and are hereupon, by some weak people, misunderstood; as if, by that certificate, we intended an approbation of all that is contained in that volume. We declare we had no such intention: As the paper we subscribed hath no word in it that gives any such intimation: But are well pleased these later writings are published (in reference whereto we only certified our belief, which we fixedly retain, of the publisher's fidelity) as they contain many passages in them, that may, in some measure, remedy the hard and hurtful construction that many expressions were more liable to *in the former*; whereof the doctor seemed apprehensive himself, when, in the beginning of his discourse on Tit. ii. 11, 12. he speaks

thus: "[Beloved, I am jealous of you with an holy jealouſy," 1 Cor. xi. 2, 3 "Leſt after the ſweet wooing of you in Chriſt's "name, that ye might be eſpouſed unto him; I ſay, I am jea- "lous, and fear, leſt as the ſerpent beguiled Eve, through his "ſubtility, namely, bewitching her to a preſumptuous, licenti- "ous adventuring on God's gentleneſs, while ſhe taſted the for- "bidden fruit; ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted from the "ſimplicity that is in him, namely, by preſuming too much upon "him and adventuring to continue in ſin, in hope that grace "may abound. For the preventing of which dangerous miſ- "carriage, which hath been the dangerous lot of many thouſands, "I thought good to ſtep in with this text, which I am perſuaded "will prove a ſeaſonable warning to ſome at leaſt."] And this pious caution of the author herein, leſt he ſhould be miſun- derſtood, gives us ſome grounds to believe, that he intended them not in the more exceptionable ſenſe. 'Tis beſt, if an unwary reader receive hurt, that he receives his healing alſo from the ſame hand. And whereas a paper was printed upon this occaſion, ſoon after the publication of the doctor's works, we willingly adopt ſo much of it as is requiſite to our preſent pur- poſe; which is to this effect:

'Some who ſubſcribed this certificate, ſaw only the paper it- 'ſelf, to which ſubſcription was deſired; never having peruſed 'the works of Dr. Criſp. The certificate only concerned the 'ſon, not the father; and certified only concerning the ſon, 'That they who ſhould ſubſcribe it, believed him in this to 'deal truly; that he was not a Falſarius; that he would not 'ſay that was his father's, which was not ſo; a paper ſo ſober, 'ſo modeſt, was *(taken by itſelf)* ſcarce refuſable by a friend.

'The ſon's preface, ſome that ſubſcribed this certificate ſaw 'not, nor had any notice, or the leaſt imagination of its con- 'tents; otherwiſe, the part of a friend had certainly been done, 'as well in adviſing againſt much of the preface, as in ſub- 'ſcribing the certificate.

'For the works of this reverend perſon themſelves, as it no 'way concerned the ſubſcribing this certificate, to know what 'they were; ſo from the opinion that went of the author, a- 'mong many good men, that he was a learned, pious, good 'man, it was ſuppoſed they were likely to have in them many 'good and uſeful things; to which it was only needful to think 'them *his*, not *to think them perfect*.

'We may, in ſome reſpect, judge of books as of men; *i. e.* 'reckon, that though divers very valuable men have had re-

'markable failings, yet that, upon the whole, 'tis better they 'have lived, and been known in the world, than that they 'should not have lived, or have lived obscure.

'The truth is (which we have often considered) that though 'the great doctrines of the Christian religion do make a most co-'herent, comely scheme, which every one should labour to 'comprehend and digest in his mind; yet when the gospel first 'becomes effectual for the changing mens hearts, it is by God's 'blessing this or that passage which drops: The most discern 'not the series and connection of truths at first, and too little 'afterwards.

'Upon that view of Dr. Crisp's writings we have had since 'the publication, we find, there are many things said in them, 'with that good savour, quickness, and spirit, as to be very apt 'to make good impressions upon men's hearts; and do judge, 'that being greatly affected with the grace of God to sinners 'himself, his sermons did thereupon run much in that strain. 'All our minds are little and incomprehensive; we cannot re-'ceive the weight and impression of all necessary things at once, 'but with some inequality; so that when the seal goes deeper 'in some part, it is shallower in some others.

'If some parts of Dr. Crisp's works be more liable to excep-'tion, the danger of hurt thereby seems, in some measure, ob-'viated in some other: As when he says, Pag. 46. Vol. I. '*Sanctification of life, is an inseparable companion with the justi-'fication of a person by the free grace of Christ.* And Vol. IV. 'p 93. *That in respect of the rules of righteousness, or the matter 'of obedience, we are under the law still; or else we are lawless, to 'live every man as seems good in his own eyes, which I know no 'true Christian does so much as think.*

'In like manner, whereas, in Vol. II. Serm. 15. *and perhaps 'elsewhere. the doctor seems to be against evidencing our justificati-'on and union to Christ, by our sanctification and new obedience; 'we have the truth of God in this matter plainly delivered by him,* 'Vol. IV. p. 36. *when he teacheth, that our obedience is a com-'fortable evidence of our being in Christ; and on that, as well as 'on many accounts, necessary.*

'The difference between him, and other good men, seems to 'lie not so much *in the things* which the one or other of them 'believe, as about *their order* and *reference to one another*; 'where, it is true, there may be very *material difference*: But 'we reckon, that notwithstanding what is more controversible 'in these writings, there are much more *material things*, where-'in they cannot but agree, and would have come much nearer

'each other, even in theſe things, if they did take ſome words 'or terms which come into uſe on the one or the other hand, 'in *the ſame ſenſe*: but when one uſes a word in *one ſenſe*, ano-'ther uſes the ſame word (or underſtands it, being uſed) in 'quite *another ſenſe*, here ſeems a vaſt diſagreement, which 'proves, at length, to be verbal only, and really none at all: 'As let by *condition*, be meant a *deſerving cauſe*, (in which caſe 'it is well known *civilians* are not wont to take it) and the one 'ſide would never uſe it, concerning any good act that can be 'done by us, or good habit that is wrought in us, in order to 'our preſent acceptance with God, or final ſalvation. Let be 'meant by it ſomewhat, that, by the conſtitution of the goſpel-'covenant, and in the nature of the thing, is *requiſite* to our 'preſent and eternal well-being, without the leaſt notion of 'deſert, but utmoſt abhorrence of any ſuch notion in this caſe; 'and the other ſide would as little refuſe it. But what need is 'there for contending at all about a *law-term*, about the pro-'per or preſent uſe whereof, there is ſo little agreement be-'tween *them it ſeems beſt to ſerve*, and *them it offends*. Let it 'go, and they will well enough underſtand one another. Again, 'let *juſtification* be taken for that which is complete, entire, 'and full, as it reſults at laſt from all its cauſes and concurrents; 'and, on the one hand, it would never be denied, that Chriſt's 'righteouſneſs juſtifies us at the bar of God in the day of judg-'ment, *as the only deſerving cauſe*: or affirmed, that our faith, 'repentance, ſincerity, do juſtify us there, *as any cauſe at all*. 'Let juſtification be meant only of being juſtified in *this or 'that particular reſpect*: as for inſtance, againſt *this particular 'accuſation*, of never having been a believer: And the honeſt 'miſtaken *prefacer* would never have ſaid, O horrid! upon its 'being ſaid, Chriſt's righteouſneſs doth not juſtify us in this 'caſe: For he very well knows, Chriſt's righteouſneſs will juſ-'tify no man that *never was a believer*. But that which muſt 'immediately juſtify him *againſt this particular accuſation*, muſt 'be proving, that he did ſincerely believe; which ſhews his 'intereſt in Chriſt's righteouſneſs, which then is the only de-'ſerving cauſe of his full and entire juſtification.'

'There is an expreſſion in *Vol.* I. *p.* 46. *That ſalvation is 'not the end of any good work we do*, which is like that of ano-'ther; *we are to act from life, not for life*. Neither of which 'are to be *rigidly taken*, as it is likely they were never meant in 'the ſtrict ſenſe. For the former, this reverend author gives 'us himſelf the handle for a gentle interpretation, in what he 'preſently ſubjoins; where he makes the *end of our good works*

'*to be the manifeſtation of our obedience and ſubjection; the ſetting forth the praiſe of the glory of the grace of God*; which ſeem-'to imply, that he meant the foregoing negation in a comparative, not in an abſolute ſenſe; underſtanding the glory of God to be *more principal*; and ſo, that by *end*, he meant the very '*ultimate end*: So for the other, it is likely it was meant, that 'we ſhould not act or work *for* life *only*, without aiming and endeavouring that we might come to work *from* life *alſo*.

'For it is not with any tolerable charity ſuppoſable, that one 'would *deliberately ſay* the *one* or the *other* of theſe in the rigid 'ſenſe of the words; or that he would not, upon conſideration, 'preſently unſay it, being calmly reaſoned with. For it were, 'in effect, to *abandon human nature*, and to ſin againſt a very 'fundamental law of our creation, not to intend our own felicity: it were to make our firſt and moſt deeply fundamental 'duty, in one great eſſential branch of it, our ſin, *viz.* To *take 'the Lord for our God*: For *to take him for our God* moſt *eſſentially*, includes our taking him for our *ſupreme good*; which 'we all know is included in the notion of the *laſt end*; it were 'to make it unlawful to ſtrive againſt all ſin, and particularly 'againſt ſinful averſion from God; wherein lies the very death 'of the ſoul, or the ſum of its miſery; or to ſtrive after perfect 'conformity to God in holineſs, and the full fruition of him; 'wherein its final bleſſedneſs doth principally conſiſt.

'It were to teach us to violate the great precepts of the go-'ſpel; *Repent that your ſins may be blotted out—Strive to enter 'in at the ſtrait gate.—Work out your own ſalvation with fear and 'trembling*: To obliterate the patterns and precedents ſet be-'fore us in the goſpel. *We have believed in Jeſus Chriſt, that 'we might be juſtified.—I bear down my body, leſt I ſhould be a 'caſt-away.—That thou mayeſt ſave thyſelf, and them that hear 'thee.*

'It were to ſuppoſe us bound to do more for the ſalvation 'of others, than our own ſalvation. We are required to ſave 'others with fear, plucking them out of the fire. Nay, we 'were not (by this rule ſtrictly underſtood) ſo much as to pray 'for our own ſalvation; (which is a doing of ſomewhat) when 'no doubt, we are to pray for the ſucceſs of the goſpel, to this 'purpoſe, on behalf of other men.

'It were to make all the threatenings of eternal death, and 'promiſes of eternal life, we find in the goſpel of our bleſſed 'Lord, uſeleſs; as motives to ſhun the one, and obtain the 'other: for they can be motives no way, but as the eſcaping

'of the former, and the attainment of the other, have, with 'us, the place and conſideration of an end.

'It makes what is mentioned in the ſcripture, as the charac-'ter and commendation of the moſt eminent ſaints, a fault; as 'of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob, *&c.* That *they ſought the better 'and heavenly country; and declared, plainly*, that they did ſo; 'which neceſſarily implies their making it their end.

'But let none be ſo harſh as to think of any good man, that 'he intended any thing of all this; if every paſſage that falls 'from us be ſtretched and tortured with the utmoſt ſeverity, 'we ſhall find little to do beſides accuſing others, and defend-'ing ourſelves, as long as we live.'

A ſpirit of meekneſs and love will do more to our common peace, than all the diſputations in the world.

Upon the whole, we are ſo well aſſured of the peaceful, heal-ing temper of the preſent author of theſe treatiſes, that we are perſuaded he deſigned ſuch a courſe of managing the contro-verſies wherein he hath concerned himſelf, as to prevent, on the one hand, injury to the memory of the dead; and, on the other, any hurt or danger to the living.

Nor do we ſay thus much of him, as if he ſought, or did need any letters of recommendation from us; but as counting this teſtimony to truth, and this expreſſion of reſpect to him, a debt; to the ſpontaneous payment whereof, nothing more was requiſite, beſides ſuch a fair occaſion as the providence of God hath now laid before us, inviting us hereunto.

John Howe,
Vin. Alſop,
Nath. Mather,
Increaſe Mather,
John Turner,
Rich. Bures,
Tho. Powel.

An EPISTLE to the READER.

Candid READER,

CENSURE not this treatiſe of errors, as an error in my prudentials, in ſending it forth at ſuch an improper time as this. I ſhould never ſpontaneouſly have awakened ſleeping controverſies, after God's ſevere caſtigation of his people for them, and in the moſt proper and hopeful ſeaſon for their re-dintegration.

And beſide what I have formerly ſaid, I think fit here to add,

That if the attack had been general, and not ſo immediately and particularly upon that poſt or quarter I was ſet to defend, I ſhould with Elihu, have modeſtly waited till ſome abler and more ſkilful hand had undertaken the defence of this cauſe.

If ever I felt a temptation to envy the happineſs of my brethren, it hath been whilſt I ſaw them quietly feeding their flocks, and myſelf forced to ſpend ſome part of my precious and moſt uſeful time (devoted to the ſame ſervice) in combating with unquiet and erring brethren: but I ſee I muſt not be my own chuſer. Notwithſtanding, I hope, and am in ſome meaſure perſuaded, that public benefit will redound to the church from this irkſome labour of mine. And that this ſtrife will ſpread no farther, but the malady be cured by an antidote growing in the very place where it began: and that the Chriſtian camp will not take a general alarm from ſuch a ſingle duel.

The book now in thy hands conſiſteth of four parts, *viz.* 1. A general diſcourſe of *the cauſes and cures of errors*, very neceſſary at all times (eſpecially at this time) for the reduction and eſtabliſhment of ſeduced and ſtaggering Chriſtians; and nothing of that nature having occurred to my obſervation among the manifold polemical tracts that are extant, I thought it might be of ſome uſe to the churches of Chriſt, in ſuch a vertiginous age as we live in; and the bleſſing of the Lord go forth with it for benefit and eſtabliſhment.

2. Next, thou haſt here the controverſies moved by my antagoniſt; *firſt*, about the *Moſaic law*, complexly taken, which he boldly pronounces to be an Adam's covenant of works. And *ſecondly*, about God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. which he alſo makes the ſame with that God made with Adam in paradiſe; and affirm circumciſion (expreſly called a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith) to be the ſeal of the ſaid covenant of works firſt made with Adam.

3. Finding my adverſary, in the purſuit of his deſign, running into many Antinomian delirations, to the reproach and damage of the cauſe he contends for, I thought it neceſſary to take the principal errors of Antinomianiſm into examination, eſpecially at ſuch a time as this, when they ſeem to ſpring afreſh, to the hazard of God's truth, and the church's peace; wherein I have dealt with becoming modeſty and plainneſs, if haply I might be any way inſtrumental in my plain and home-way of argumentation, to detect the falſity and dangerous nature of thoſe notions which ſome good men have vented, and preſerve

the ſounder part of the church from ſo dangerous a contagion.

4. In the next place, I think it neceſſary to adverti ſe the reader, That whereas, in my firſt appendix under that head of the conditionality of the new covenant, I have aſſerted faith to be the condition of it, and do acknowledge, that the word *condition* is variouſly uſed among Juriſts; yet I do not uſe it in any ſenſe, which implies or inſinuates, that there is any ſuch condition in the new covenant, as that in Adam's covenant was, conſiſting inperfect, perſonal, and perpetual obedience: or any thing in its own nature, meritorious of the benefits promiſed, or capable to be performed by us in our own ſtrength; but plainly, that it be an act of ours (though done in God's ſtrength) which muſt be neceſſarily done before we can be actually juſtified or ſaved; and ſo there is found in it the true ſuſpending nature of a condition; which is the thing I contend for, when I affirm, faith is the condition of the new covenant.

How many ſenſes ſoever may be given of this word *condition*, this is the determinate ſenſe in which I uſe it throughout this controverſy. And whoſoever denies the ſuſpending nature of faith, with reſpect to actual juſtification, pleads (according to my underſtanding) for the actual juſtification of infidels. And thus I find a condition defined by *Navar. Johan. Baptiſt. Petrus de Peruſ.* &c. *Conditio eſt ſuſpenſio alicujus diſpoſitionis tantiſper dum aliquid futurum fiat.* Condition is the ſuſpenſion of a grant until ſomething future be done. And again, *Conditio eſt quidam futurus eventus, in quem diſpoſitio ſuſpenditur* A condition is ſome future event in which the fulfilling of a grant is ſuſpended.

Once more, my reader poſſibly may be ſtumbled at my calling faith ſometimes the inſtrument, and ſometimes the condition of our juſtification, when there is ſo great a controverſy depending among learned men, with reſpect to the uſe of both thoſe terms. I therefore deſire the reader to take notice, that I dive not into that controverſy here, much leſs preſume to determine it; but finding both theſe notions equally oppoſed by our Antinomians, who reject our actual juſtification by faith either way, and allow to faith no other uſe, in our actual juſtification, but only to manifeſt to us what was done from eternity; I do therefore uſe both thoſe terms, *viz.* the conditionality and inſtrumentality of faith, with reſpect unto our juſtification, and ſhew in what ſenſe thoſe terms are uſeful in this controverſy, and are accommodate enough to the deſign and purpoſe for

which I uſe them; how repugnant ſoever they are in that particular, wherein the learned contend about the uſe and application of them.

To be plain, when I ſay faith juſtifieth us as an *organ* or *inſtrument*; my only meaning is, that it receives, or apprehends the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, by which we are juſtified; and ſo ſpeaking to the *quomodo*, or manner of our juſtification, I ſay, with the general ſuffrage of divines, we are juſtified inſtrumentally by faith.

But in our controverſy with the Antinomians where another different queſtion is moved about the *quando*, or time of our actual juſtification; there I affirm, that we are actually juſtified at the time of our believing, and not before; and this being the act upon which our juſtification is ſuſpended, I call *faith* the *condition* of our juſtification.

This, I deſire may be obſerved, leſt, in my uſe of both theſe terms, my reader ſhould think either that I am not aware of the controverſy depending about thoſe terms; or, that I do herein manifeſt the vacillancy of my judgment, as if I leaned ſometime to one ſide, and ſometime to another. I ſpeak not here *ad idem*, as they do in that conteſt; but when I call it a *condition* of juſtification, my meaning is, that no man is juſtified until he believe. And when I call it an *inſtrument*, my meaning is, that it is the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, apprehended by faith, which doth juſtify us when we believe. And ſo I find the generality of our divines calling *faith* ſometimes a *condition*, and ſometimes an *inſtrument* of our juſtification, as here I do.

And if there be any expreſſion my reader ſhall meet with, which is leſs accurate, and may be capable of another ſenſe; I crave that candour from him, that he interpret it according to this my declared intention.

5. *Laſtly*, I have added to the former, a ſhort, plain, practical ſermon, to promote the peace and unity of the churches of Chriſt, and to prevent their relapſe into paſt follies.

In all the parts of this diſcourſe, I have ſincerely aimed at the purity and peace of the church of God; and he greatly miſtakes, that takes me for a man of contention. It is true, I am here contending with my brethren, but pure neceſſity brought me in, and an unpleaſing irkſomneſs hath attended me through it; and an hearty deſire, and ſerious motion for peace, amongſt all the profeſſed members of Chriſt, ſhall cloſe and finiſh it. Let all litigations of this nature (at leaſt in this critical juncture) be ſuſpended by common conſent, ſince they waſte our time,

hinder our communion, imbitter our ſpirits, impoveriſh practical godlineſs, grieve the ſpirit of God, and good men, make ſport for our common enemies, who warm their own fingers at the fire of our contentions; and place more truſt in our dividing luſts, than they do in their own feeble arguments, or caſtrated penal laws, to effect our ruin.

It is my grief (the Lord knows) to ſee the delightful communion the ſaints once enjoyed, whilſt they walked together under the ſame ordinances of God, now diſſolved in ſuch a ſad and ſcandalous degree, by the impreſſions of erroneous opinions, made both upon their heads and hearts. I do therefore heartily join with Budaeus in his pious wiſh *, "That God would "give his people as much conſtancy in retaining the truths they "once received, as they had joy and comfort at their firſt re-"ception of them." I muſt, on this occaſion, declare my juſt jealouſy that the non-improvement of our baptiſmal covenant unto the great and ſolemn ends thereof, in our mortification, vivification, and regular communion with the church of Chriſt, into which ſociety we were matriculated by it, is, at this day, puniſhed upon profeſſors in thoſe fiery heats, and fierce oppoſitions, unto which God ſeemeth to have penally delivered us at this day.

For my own part, it is my fixed reſolution to provoke no good man if I can help it. But if their own intemperate zeal ſhall provoke them, in purſuit of their errors, to deſtroy the very nature of God's covenant of grace with Abraham, and his ſeed, and I have a plain call (as here I had) at once to defend God's truths, and my people's ſoul againſt them, I will earneſtly contend in the cauſe of truth, whilſt I can move my tongue, or make uſe of the pen of the ſcribe.

Reader, I ſhall appeal to thee, if thou be wiſe and impartial, Whether any man that underſtands the covenant of God renewed with Abraham, (which is the grand charter, by which we and our children hold and enjoy the moſt invaluable privileges) can endure to ſee it diſſolved and utterly deſtroyed, by making it an aboliſhing Adam's covenant of works; and ſtand by as an unconcerned ſpectator, when challenged and provoked to ſpeak in defence thereof.

Is there any thing found in God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. to made it an aboliſhed covenant of works, which

* *Utinam tam conſertis manibus compertam comprehenſamque veritatem ſemel retinere poſſemus quam protinus agnitam feſtivis oculis hilares exoſculamur.*

doth not as injuriouſly bear upon, and ſtrike at the very life of the covenant of grace, in the laſt and beſt edition of it, under which the whole church of God now ſtands? What is that thing (*I would fain know*) in God's covenant with Abraham? Is it the promiſſory part of it, "I will be a God unto thee, and to "thy ſeed after thee?" Gen. xvii. 7. God forbid: for the eſſential and ſweeteſt part of the new covenant is contained in that promiſe, Jer. xxxi. 33. Heb. viii. 10. Yet thou wilt find my Antagoniſt here forced to aſſert, God may become a people's God in ſpecial manner, by virtue of the aboliſhed covenant of works; and ſuch he makes this covenant to be.

Or does the reſtipulation Abraham and his were here required to make unto God, even *to walk before him, and be perfect*, doth this make it an Adam's covenant of works? Surely no. For as God there requires perfection of Abraham, ſo Chriſt requires the ſame perfection of all new covenant-federates now, Matth. v. 48. "Be ye perfect, as your Father which is in hea-"ven is perfect;" which is altogether as much as ever God required of Abraham and his, in Gen. xvii. 1. Take perfection in what ſenſe you will, either for a *poſitive* perfection, conſiſting in truth and ſincerity; or a *comparative* perfection, conſiſting in the growth and more eminent degrees of grace; or a *ſuperlative* perfection, which all new-covenant-federates ſtrive after here, Phil. iii. 12, 13. and ſhall certainly attain in heaven, Heb. xii. 23. In this alſo the covenant with Abraham, and with us, are truly and ſubſtantially one and the ſame.

Or doth my miſtaken friend imagine, that God required this perfection of Abraham, and his, as in the firſt covenant he required it from Adam and all his? *viz.* to be performed and maintained in his own ſtrength, under penalty of the curſe. But now, though Chriſt command perfection, yet what duty lies in any command, anſwerable ſtrength for it lies in the promiſe? Very well, and was it not ſo then? Compare the command, Deut. x. 16. "Circumciſe therefore the fore-ſkins of "your hearts," with the anſwerable gracious promiſe to enable them ſo to do, Deut. xxx. 6. "The Lord thy God will cir-"cumciſe thy heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love the "Lord thy God."

Or laſtly, Did circumciſion, the ſign and ſeal added to Abraham's covenant, make it an Adam's covenant of works? That's equally impoſſible with the former: for no man, but ſuch a daring man as I am concerned with, will dare to ſay, that a *ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith* (as circumciſion was, Rom. iv. 11.) can make the covenant, to which it is affixed (and which I have

ſhewn in all the other ſubſtantial parts, the very ſame with that we are now under) to become an Adam's covenant of works.

Theſe things I have here ſuper-added, to leave as little as poſſible behind me to be an occaſion of further trouble and contention. Let all ſtrife therefore, in ſo plain a caſe, be ended: contentious ſpirits, are not the moſt excellent ſpirits among Chriſtians. Fire (and ſo contention) is more apt to catch in low built thatcht cottages, than in high built caſtles and princely palaces: the higher we go, ſtill the more peace. The higheſt region is moſt ſedate and calm. Stars have the ſtrongeſt influence when in conjunction. Angels (though legions) have no wars among them; and as willingly go down, as up the ladder, without juſtling each other. And the moſt high God is the God of peace; let us alſo be the children of peace. And I do aſſure the perſons with whom I contend, that whilſt they hold the head, and are tender of the church's peace, I can live in charity with them here, and hope to live in glory with them hereafter.

I remain, reader, thine and
the truth's friend
JOHN FLAVEL.

THE INTRODUCTION.

FINDING, by ſad experience, what I before juſtly feared, that *errors* would be apt to ſpring up with liberty (tho' the reſtraint of juſt liberty being a practical error in rulers, can never be the cure of *mental errors* in the ſubjects;) I judged it neceſſary, at this ſeaſon, to give a ſuccinct account of the riſe, cauſes, and remedies of ſeveral miſtakes and errors, under which, even the reformed churches among us, as well as others, do groan at this day.

I will not ſtay my reader long upon the etymology and derivations of the word. We all know that etymologies are no definitions: yet becauſe they caſt ſome light upon the nature of the thing we enquire after, it will not be loſt labour to obſerve, that this word ERROR, derives itſelf from three roots in the Hebrew language.

(1.) The firſt * "word primitively ſignifies to deviate or decline from the true ſcope or path," as unſkilful marks-men,

* חטא *Charta, a Scopo aberravit.*

or ignorant and inadvertent travellers uſe to do. The leaſt variation or turning aſide from the true rule and line, tho' it be but an hair's breadth, preſently becomes an error. We read, Judg. xx. 16. of 700 Benjamites, who could every one ſling *ſtones* at an hair's breadth, and not miſs, לא יחטא Heb. *and not err*. This, by a *metaphor*, is applied to the mind or judgment of man; and denotes the warpings thereof from the ſtraight, perfect, divine law or rule, and is uſually tranſlated by the word *ſin*.

(2.) It is derived from another word alſo, which ſignifies to wander in variable and uncertain motions: You find it * in the title of the 7th Pſalm, Shiggaion of David, a wandring ſong, or a ſong of variable notes and tunes, higher and lower, ſharper and flatter. In both the former derivations it ſeems to note ſimple error, through mere weakneſs and ignorance. But then,

(3.) In its derivation from a third root †, it ſignifies not only to err, but to cauſe others to err alſo; and ſo ſignifies a ſeducer, or one that is active in leading others into a wrong way; and is applied in that ſenſe, to the prophets in Iſrael, who ſeduced the people, Ezek. xiii. 10. The Greek verb πλανᾶω, takes in both theſe ſenſes, both to go aſtray, and, when put tranſitively, to lead or cauſe others to go aſtray with us. Hence is the word πλανήτης, planets, or wandering ſtars; the title given by the apoſtle Jude, ver. 13. to the falſe teachers and ſeducers of his time.

An error then is any departure or deviation in our opinions or judgments from the perfect rule of the divine law: and to this all men, by nature, are not only liable, but inclinable. Indeed man, by nature, can do nothing elſe but err, Pſal. lviii. 3. *He goeth aſtray as ſoon as born*; makes not one true ſtep till renewed by grace, and many falſe ones after his renovation. The life of the holieſt man is a book with many errata's; but the whole edition of a wicked man's life, is but one continued error: he that thinks he cannot err, manifeſtly errs in ſo thinking. The Pope's ſuppoſed and pretended infallibility hath made him the great deceiver of the world. A good man may err, but is willing to know his error; and will not obſtinately maintain it, when he once plainly diſcerns it.

Error and hereſy, among other things, differ in this: hereſy is accompanied with pertinacy, and therefore the heretic is αὐτοκατάκριτος, ſelf-condemned; his own conſcience condemns

* שגה *Shaga.* † טעה Tagna in Hiph.

him, whilſt men labour in vain to convince him. He doth not formally, and in terms, condemn himſelf; but he doth ſo equivalently, whilſt he continues to own and maintain doctrines and opinions which he finds himſelf unable to defend againſt the evidence of truth. Human frailty may lead a man into the firſt, but deviliſh pride fixes him in the laſt.

The word of God, which is our rule, muſt therefore be the only teſt and touchſtone to try and diſcover errors; for *regula eſt index ſui & obliqui*. 'Tis not enough to convince a man of error, that his judgment differs from other mens; you muſt bring it to the word, and try how it agrees or diſagrees therewith; elſe he that charges another with error, may be found in as great or greater an error himſelf. None are more diſpoſed eaſily to receive, and tenaciouſly to defend errors, than thoſe who are the *Anteſignani*, heads or leaders of erroneous ſects; eſpecially after they have fought in defence of bad cauſes, and deeply engaged their reputation.

The following diſcourſe juſtly entitles itſelf, A BLOW AT THE ROOT. And though you will here find the roots of many errors laid bare and open, which, comparatively, are of far different degrees of danger and malignity; which I here mention together, many of them ſpringing from the ſame root: Yet I am far from cenſuring them alike; nor would I have any that are concerned in leſſer errors be exaſperated, becauſe their leſſer miſtakes are mentioned with greater and more pernicious ones; this candour I not only intreat, but juſtly challenge from my reader.

And becauſe there are many general and very uſeful obſervations about errors, which will not ſo conveniently come under the laws of that method which governs the main part of this diſcourſe, *viz.* CAUSES and CURES of error: I have therefore ſorted them by themſelves, and premiſed them to the following part in twenty obſervations next enſuing.

* *

Twenty general OBSERVATIONS about the Riſe and Increaſe of the ERRORS of the Times.

Firſt Obſervation.

TRUTH is the proper object, the natural and pleaſant food of the underſtanding, Job xii. 11. *Doth not the ear* (that is, the underſtanding by the ear) *try words, as the mouth taſteth meat?* Knowledge is the aſſimilation of the underſtanding to

the truths received by it. Nothing is more natural to man, than a deſire to know: knowledge never cloys the mind, as food doth the natural appetite; but as the one increaſeth, the other is proportionably ſharpened and provoked. The minds of all (that are not wholly immerſed in ſenſuality) ſpend their ſtrength in the laborious ſearch and purſuit of truth: ſometimes climbing up from the effects to the cauſes, and then deſcending again from the cauſes to the effects; and all to diſcover truth. Fervent prayer, ſedulous ſtudy, fixed meditations, are the labours of inquiſitive ſouls after truth. All the objections and counter-arguments the mind meets in its way, are but the pauſes and heſitations of a bivious ſoul, not able to determine whether truth lies upon this ſide, or upon that.

Anſwerable to the ſharpneſs of the mind's appetite, is the fine edge of pleaſure and delight it feels in the diſcovery and acquiſition of truth. When it hath racked and tortured itſelf upon knotty problems, and, at laſt, diſcovered the truth it ſought for, with what joy doth the ſoul dilate itſelf, and run (as it were with open arms) to claſp and welcome it?

The underſtanding of man, at firſt, was perſpicacious and clear; all truths lay obvious in their comely order and raviſhing beauty before it: *God made man upright*, Eccl. vii. 29. This rectitude of his mind conſiſted in light and knowledge, as appears by the preſcribed method of his recovery, Col. iii. 10. *Renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him.* Truth in the mind, or the mind's union with truth, being part of the divine image in man, diſcovers to us the ſin and miſchief of error, which is a defacing (ſo far as it prevails) of the image of God.

No ſooner was man created, but by the exerciſe of knowledge he ſoon diſcovered God's image in him; and by his ambition after more, loſt what he had. So that now there is an hazineſs or cloud ſpread over truth by ignorance and error, the ſad effects of the fall.

Obſerv. 2. Of knowledge there are divers ſorts and kinds: ſome is *human*, and ſome *divine*; ſome *ſpeculative*, and ſome *practical*; ſome *ingrafted* as the notions of *morality*, and ſome *acquired* by painful ſearch and ſtudy: but of all knowledge, none like that divine and ſupernatural knowledge of ſaving truths revealed by Chriſt in the ſcriptures; from whence ariſeth the different degrees both of the ſinfulneſs and danger of errors; thoſe errors being always the worſt, which are committed againſt the moſt important truths revealed in the goſpel.

These truths ly infolded either in the plain words, or evident and necessary consequences from the words of the Holy Scripture; scripture-consequences are of great use for the refutation of errors: it was by a scripture-consequence, that Christ successfully proved the resurrection against the Sadducees, Mat. xxii. The Arians, and other heretics, rejected consequential proofs, and rquired the expres words of Scripture only; hoping, that way, to defend and secure their errors against the arguments and assaults of the orthodox.

Some think that reason and natural light is abundantly sufficient for the direction of life; but certainly nothing is more necessary to us, for that end, than the written word; for tho' the remains of natural light have their place and use, in directing us about natural and earthly things, yet they are utterly insufficient to guide us in spiritual and heavenly things, 1 Cor. ii. 14. "The natural man receiveth not the things of God," &c. Eph. v. 8. "Once were ye in darkness, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ, now "are ye light in the Lord;" *i. e.* by a beam of heavenly light shining from the Spirit of Christ thro' the written word, into your minds or understandings.

'Tis the written word which shines upon the path of our duty, Psal. cxix. 105. The scriptures of the Old and New Testament do jointly make the solid foundation of a Christian's faith. Hence, Eph. ii. 20. we are said to be built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets. We are bound therefore to honour Old Testament scriptures, as well as new, they being part of the divine canon; and must not scruple to admit them as sufficient, and authentic proofs, for the confirmation of truths, and refutation of errors. Christ referred the people to them, John v. 39. and Paul preached and disputed from them, Acts xxvi. 22.

Observe. 3. *Unto the attainment of divine knowledge out of the scriptures, some things are naturally, yet less principally requisite in the subject; and something absolutely, and principally necessary.*

The natural qualifications desirable in the subject, are clearness of apprehension, solidity of judgment, and fidelity of retention. These are desirable requisites to make the understanding susceptible of knowledge; but the irradiation of the mind, by the Spirit of God, is principally necessary, John xvi. 13. "He shall guide you into all truth:" The clearest and most comfortable light he giveth to men is in the way of sanctification, called the teachings of the anointing, 1 John. ii. 27.

When this spiritual sanctifying light shines upon a mind, natu-

rally enriched and qualified with the three forementioned requisites, that mind excels others in the riches of knowledge. And yet the teachings of the Spirit, in the way of sanctification, do very much supply and recompense the defects and weaknesses of the forementioned qualifications. Whence two things are highly remarkable:

1. That men of great abilities of nature, clear apprehensions in natural things; strong judgments, and tenacious memories, do not only frequently fall into gross errors, and damnable *heresies* themselves, but become *Heresiarchs*, or heads of erroneous factions, drawing multitudes into the same sin and misery with themselves; as Arius, Socinus, Pelagius, Bellarmine, and multitudes of others have done.

And secondly, It is no less remarkable, that men of weaker parts, but babes in comparison, through the sanctification and direction of the Spirit, for which they have humbly waited at his feet in prayer, have not only been directed and guided by him into the truth, but so confirmed and fixed therein, that they have been kept sound in their judgments, in times of abounding errors; and firm in there adherence to it, in days of fiercest persecution. How men of excellent natural parts have been blinded, and men of weak natural parts illuminated; see 1 Cor. i. 26, 27. Mat. xi. 25.

Observ. 4. *Among the manifold impediments to the obtaining of true knowledge, and settling the mind in the truth and faith of the gospel, these three are of special remark and consideration;* viz. *ignorance, curiosity, and error.*

Ignorance slights it, or despairs of attaining it. Truth falls into contempt among the ignorant, from sluggishness, and apprehension of the difficulties that lie in the way to it, Prov. xxiv. 7. *Wisdom is too high for a fool.* Curiosity runs beside or beyond it. This pride and wantonness of the mind, puffs it up with a vain conceit, that it is not only able to penetrate the deepest mysteries revealed in the scripture, but even unrevealed secrets also; Col. ii. 18. "Intruding into those things "which he hath not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind." But error militates directly against it, contradicts and opposeth truth, especially when an error is maintained by pride against inward convictions, or means of better information. 'Tis bad to maintain an error for want of light; but abundantly worse to maintain it against light. This is such an affront to the Spirit of God, as he usually punishes with penal ignorance, and gives them up to a spirit of error.

Obſerv. 5. *Error is binding upon the conſcience, as well as truth; and altogether as much, and, ſometimes, more influential upon the affections and paſſions, as truth is.*

For it preſents not itſelf to the ſoul in its own name and nature, as error; but in the name and dreſs of truth, and under that notion binds the conſcience, and vigorouſly influences the paſſions and affections; and then being more indulgent to luſt, than truth is, it is, for that, ſo much the more embraced and hugged by the deceived ſoul, Acts xxii. 4, 5. The heat that error puts the ſoul into, differs from religious zeal, as a feveriſh doth from a natural heat; which is not, indeed, ſo benign and agreeable, but much more fervent and ſcorching. A mind under the power of error, is reſtleſs and impatient to propogate its errors to others, and theſe heats prey upon, and eat up the vital ſpirits and powers of religion.

Obſerv. 6. *'Tis exceeding difficult to get out error, when once it is imbibed, and hath rooted itſelf by an open profeſſion.*

Errors, like ſome ſorts of weeds, having once ſeeded in a field or garden, 'tis ſcarce poſſible to ſubdue and deſtroy them; eſpecially if they be hereditary errors, or have grown up with us from our youth, ; *a teneris aſſueſcere multum eſt*, ſaith Seneca; 'tis a great advantage to truth, or error, to have an early and long poſſeſſion of the mind. The Phariſees held many erroneous opinions about the law, as appears by their corruptive commentaries upon it, refuted by Chriſt, Mat. v. But did he root them out of their heads and hearts thereby? No, no; they ſooner rid him out of the world. The Sadducees held a moſt dangerous error about the reſurrection; Chriſt diſputed with them, to the admiration of others, and proved it clearly againſt them; and yet, we find the error remaining long after Chriſt's death, 2 Tim. ii. 18. The apoſtles themſelves had their minds tinctured with this error, that Chriſt ſhould be outwardly great and magnificent in the world, and raiſe his followers to great honours and preferments amongſt men. Chriſt plainly told them it was their miſtake and error; "for the ſon of man came not "to be miniſtred unto, but to miniſter;" yet this did not rid their minds of the error; it ſtuck faſt in them, even till his aſcenſion to heaven. O how hard is it to clear the heart of a good man once leavened with error! and much more hard to ſeparate it from a wicked man *.

* I am perſuaded (ſaith Mr. Gurnal) ſome men take more pains to

Some have choſen rather to die, than to part with their darling errors, and ſoul-damning hereſies. I have read (ſaith Mr Bridges) of a great Atheiſt, that was burnt at Paris for blaſpheming Chriſt, held faſt his Atheiſtical opinions till he came to the very ſtake; boaſted to the prieſts and friars that followed him, how much more confidently he went to ſacrifice his life in the ſtrength of reaſon, under which he ſuffered, than Chriſt himſelf did; but when he began to feel torments indeed, then he roared and raged to the purpoſe. *Vidi ego hominem*, ſaith the author: In his life, he was looſe; in his impriſonments, ſullen; and at his death, mad with the horrors of conſcience.

Some, indeed, have recovered the ſoundneſs of their judgments, after deep corruptions by dangerous errors. Auſtin was a Manichee, and fully recovered from it. So have many more; and yet multitudes hold them faſt even to death, and nothing but the fire can reveal their work, and diſcover what is gold, and what is ſtraw and ſtubble.

Obſerv. 7. It deſerves a remark, *That men are not ſo circumſpect and jealous of the corruption of their minds by errors, as they are of their bodies in times of contagion; or of their lives, with reſpect to groſs immoralities.*

Spiritual dangers affect us leſs than corporal; and intellectual evils leſs than moral. Whether this be the effect of hypocriſy, the errors of the mind being more ſecret and inviſible than thoſe of the converſation, God only knows, man cannot poſitively determine.

Or whether it be the effect of ignorance, that men think there is leſs ſin and danger in the one than in the other; not conſidering, that an apoplexy ſeizing the head, is every way as mortal as a ſword piercing the body: And that a vertigo will as much unfit a man for ſervice, as an ague or fever. The apoſtle, in 2 Pet. ii. 1. calls them αιρεσεις απωλειας, damnable hereſies, or hereſies of deſtruction. An error in the mind may be as damning and deſtructive to the ſoul, as an error of immorality or profaneneſs in the life.

Or whether it may come to paſs from ſome remains of fear and tenderneſs in the conſcience, which forbids men to reduce their erroneous principles into practice; their lying under ma-

to furniſh themſelves with arguments to defend ſome error they have taken up, than they do for the moſt ſaving truths in the bible. Auſtin ſaid, when he was a Manichaean, *Non tu eras, ſed error meus erat Deus meus*: Thou, O Lord, wert not, but my error was my God. *Gurnall's Chriſtian Armour, part* 2, *pag.* 36.

ny confident errors in the mind, a ſecret jealouſy, which we call *formido oppoſiti*, which will not ſuffer them to act to the full height of their profeſſed opinions. Auſtin gives this character even of Pelagius himſelf, *Retract. lib.* II. *cap.* 33. *Nomen Pelagii non ſine laude aliqua poſui, quia vita ejus a multis praedicabatur:* I have not mentioned *(ſaith he)* the name of that man, without ſome praiſe, becauſe his life was famed by many. *And* of Swinkfeldius it is ſaid, *Caput regulatum illi defuit, cor bonum non defuit:* His heart was much more regular than his head. Yet this falls out but rarely in the world; for looſe principles naturally run into looſe practices; and the errors of the head into the immoralities of life.

Obſerv. 8. *It is a great judgment of God, to be given over to an erroneous mind.*

For the underſtanding being the leading faculty, as that guides, the other powers and affections of the ſoul follow, as horſes in a team follow the fore-horſe. Now, how ſad and dangerous a thing is this, for Satan to ride the fore-horſe, and guide that which is to guide the life of man? That's a dreadful, ſpiritual, judicial ſtroke of God which we read of, Rom. i. 26. παρέδωκεν αυτους ο Θεος εις παθη ατιμιας: God, by a penal tradition, ſuffered them to run into the dregs of immorality, and pollutions of life; and that, becauſe they abuſed their light, and became vain in their imaginations, ver. 21.

Wild whimſies and fancies in the head, uſually miſlead men into the puddle and mire of profaneneſs, and then 'tis commonly obſerved God ſets ſome viſible mark of his diſpleaſure upon them; eſpecially the Hereſiarchs, or ring-leaders in error. Neſtorius his tongue was conſumed by worms. Cerinthus his brains knocked out by the fall of an houſe. Montanus hanged himſelf: It were eaſy to inſtance in multitudes of others, whom the viſible hand of God hath marked for a warning to others; but uſually the ſpiritual errors of the mind are followed with a conſumption and decay of religion in the ſoul. If grace be in the heart, where error ſways its ſceptre in the head, yet uſually there it languiſhes and withers. They may miſtake their dropſy for growth and flouriſhing; and think themſelves to be more ſpiritual, becauſe more airy and notional; but if men would judge themſelves impartially, they will certainly find that the ſeeds of grace thrive not in the heart, when ſhaded and overdropt by an erroneous head.

Obſerv. 9. *'Tis a pernicious evil, to advance a mere opinion into the place and ſeat of an article of faith; and to lay as great a ſtreſs upon it, as they ought to do upon the moſt*

clear and fundamental point. To be as much concerned for a tile upon the roof, as for the corner-ſtone, which unites the walls, and ſuſtains the building.

Opinion (as one truly ſaith) is but reaſon's projector, and the ſpy of truth; it makes, in its fulleſt diſcovery, no more than the dawning and twilight of knowledge; and yet, I know not how it comes to paſs, but ſo it is, that this idol of the mind holds ſuch a ſway and empire over all we hold, as if it were all the day we had. Matters of mere opinion, are every where cried up by ſome erroriſts, for mathematical demonſtration, and articles of faith written with a ſun-beam; worſhipping the fancies and creatures of their own minds, more than God; and putting more truſt in their ill founded opinions, than in the ſurer word of prophecy. Much like that Humoriſt that would not truſt day-light, but kept his candle ſtill burning by him; becauſe, ſaith he, this is not ſubject to eclipſes, as the ſun is.

And what more frequent, when controverſies grow fervent, than for thoſe that maintain the error, to boaſt every ſilly argument to be a demonſtration; to upbraid and pity the blindneſs and dulneſs of their oppoſers, as men that ſhut their eyes againſt ſun-beams; yea, ſometimes, to draw their preſumptuous cenſures through the very hearts of their oppoſers, and to inſinuate, that they muſt needs hold the truths of God in unrighteouſneſs, ſin againſt their knowledge, and that nothing keeps them from coming over to them, but pride, ſhame, or ſome worldly intereſt? What a complicated evil is here! Here's a proud exalting of our own opinions, and an immodeſt impoſing on the minds of others, more clear and ſound than our own, and a dangerous uſurpation of God's prerogative in judging the hearts and ends of our brethren.

Obſerv. 10. *Error being conſcious to itſelf of its own weakneſs, and the ſtrong aſſaults that will be made upon it, evermore labours to defend and ſecure itſelf under the wings of antiquity, reaſon, ſcripture, and high pretenſions to reformation and piety.*

Antiquity is a venerable word, but ill uſed, when made a cloke for error. Truth muſt needs be elder than error; as the rule muſt neceſſarily be, before the aberration from it. The grey hairs of opinions are then only beauty, and a crown, when found in the way of righteouſneſs. *Copper* (ſaith learned Du Moulin) will never become gold by age. A lie will be a lie, let it be never ſo ancient. We diſpute not by years, but by reaſons drawn from ſcripture. That which is now called an ancient opinion, if it be not a true opinion, was once but a new

error. When you can tell us, how many years are required to turn an error into truth, then we will give more heed to antiquity, when preſſed in the ſervice of error, than we now think due to it.

If antiquity will not do, reaſon ſhall be preſs'd to ſerve error's turn at a dead-lift; and, indeed, the pencil of reaſon can lay curious colours upon rotten timber, and varniſh over erroneous principles, with fair and plauſible pretences. What expert artiſts have the Socinians proved themſelves in this matter? But becauſe men are bound to ſubmit human authority and reaſon to divine revelation, both muſt give way, and ſtrike ſail to the written word.

Hence is comes to paſs, that the great patrons and factors for error, do above all things, labour to gain countenance to their errors from the written word; and, to this end, they manifeſtly wreſt and wrack the ſcriptures, to make them ſubſervient to their opinions; not impartially ſtudying the ſcriptures firſt, and forming their notions and opinions according to them. But they bring their erroneous opinions to the ſcriptures, and then, with all imaginable art and ſophiſtry, wire-draw and force the ſcriptures to countenance and legitimate their opinions *.

But becauſe pretences of piety and reformation † are the ſtrokes that give life to the face of this idol, and give it the neareſt reſemblance unto truth, theſe therefore never fail to be made uſe of, and zealouſly profeſſed in the favour of error, though there be little of either many times to be found in their perſons, and nothing at all in the doctrines that lay claim to it.

Obſervation 11. *God in all ages, in his tender care for his churches and truths, hath ſtill qualified and excited his ſervants, for the defence of his precious truths, againſt the errors and hereſies that have ſucceſſively aſſaulted them.*

As Providence is obſerved in every climate and iſland of the world, to have provided antidotes againſt the poiſonous plants and animals of the country, and the one is never far from the other: So is the care of his providence much more conſpicuous

* Every hereſy has the devil for the parent of its invention, and is obnoxious to the ſhame of ſo odious a name. It profeſſes the Saviour's name, which is moſt excellent and tranſcends all, and is diſguiſed under ſcripture expreſſions. *Athanaſius againſt Arian.*

† Take heed, ſaith one, that when zeal for reformation knocks at the door, ſome new errors ſtep not in with it, which will as much need an after-reformation.

in the caſe now before us. When, or whereſoever, venomous errors, and deadly hereſies do ariſe, he hath his ſervants at hand with antidotes againſt them.

When Arius, that cunning and deadly enemy to the Deity of Chriſt, ſtruck at the very heart of our religion, faith, and comfort; a man of ſubtle parts, and blameleſs life, which made his hereſy much the more ſpreading and taking; the Lord had his well-furniſhed Athanaſius in a readineſs to reſiſt and confound him. And as he had his Athanaſius to defend the Deity of Chriſt, ſo he wanted not his Baſil to defend the doctrine of the holy Spirit againſt Macedonius.

So when Pelagius was buſily advancing *free-will* into the throne of *free-grace*, providence wanted not its mallet in learned and ingenious Auguſtine, to break him and his idol to pieces. And it is highly remarkable, (as the learned Dr. Hill obſerves), that Auguſtine was born in Africa, the ſame day that Pelagius was born in Britain.

When Gotteſchalchus publiſhed his dangerous doctrine about predeſtination, the Lord drew forth Hincmarus to detect and confute that error, by evincing clearly, that God's predeſtination forces no man to ſin.

So, from the beginning and firſt riſe of Popery, that center and ſink of errors, we have a large catalogue of the learned and famous witneſſes, which, in all ages, have faithfully reſiſted and oppoſed it; and when, notwithſtanding all, it had even overrun Europe like a rapid torrent, or rather, inundation of the ocean, and Germany was brought to that paſs, that if the Pope had but commanded it, they would have eaten graſs or hay, *more pecudum*; then did the Lord bring forth invincible Luther, and with him a troop of learned champions, into the field againſt him; ſince which time, the cauſe of Popery is become deſperate.

Thus the care of providence, in all ages, hath been as much diſplayed in protecting the church againſt the dangers that aroſe from falſe brethren within it, as from avowed, perſecuting enemies without it; and had it not been ſo, the rank weeds of hereſies and errors had long ſince over-topt and choaked the corn, and made the church a barren field.

Obſerv. 12. *The want of a modeſt ſuſpicion, and juſt reflexion, gives both confidence and growth to erroneous opinions.*

If matters of mere opinion were kept in their proper place, under the careful guard of ſuſpicion, they would not make

that buſtle and confuſion in the churches they have done, and do at this day.

It is confeſſed, that all truths are not matters of mere opinion; neither are all opinions of equal weight and value; and therefore not to be left hanging in an *equipendious ſcepticiſm.* And yet it is as true, that matters of opinion ought carefully to be ſorted from matters of faith, and to be kept in their own rank and claſs, as things doubtful, *quibus poteſt ſubeſſe falſum;* whilſt matters of faith clearly revealed, are to ſtand upon their own ſure and firm baſis. The former, *viz.* matters of mere opinion, we are ſo to hold, as upon clearer light to be ready to part with them, and give them up into the hands of truth. The other, *viz.* matters of faith, we are to hold with reſolution to live and die by them.

What is opinion, but the wavering of the underſtanding betwixt probable arguments, for and againſt a point of doctrine? So that it is rather an inclination than an aſſertion, as being accompanied with fear, floating and inconſtancy. In ſuch caſes there ſhould be a due conceſſion and allowance of other mens opinions to them, and why not, whilſt they offer as fair for the truth as we? and haply their parts, helps, and induſtries are not inferior to ours; it may be beyond them; and we may diſcern in them as much tenderneſs of conſcience, and fear of ſin, as in ourſelves. In this caſe, a little more modeſt ſuſpicion in our opinions, would do the church a great deal of right; and that which ſhould prevail with all modeſt perſons to exerciſe it, is the juſt reflexion they may make upon their own former confident miſtakes.

Obſerv. 13. *There is a remarkable involution or concatenation of errors, one linking in, and drawing another after.*

Amongſt all erroneous ſects, there is ſtill ſome πρῶτον ψεῦδος, ſome Helena, for whoſe ſake the war againſt truth is commenced; and the other leſſer errors are preſſed for the ſake and ſervice of this leading darling error. As we ſee the whole * troop of *indulgences, bulls, maſſes, pilgrimages, purgatory,* with multitudes more, flow from, and are preſſed into the ſervice of the Pope's ſupremacy and infallibility; ſo, in other ſects, men are forced to entertain many other errors, which, in them-

* Πρῶτον ψεῦδος. The leading error of the church of Rome is, That all things muſt be ſubjected to the ſupreme judgment and tribunal of the church over which the Pope preſides. Thence it is concluded, That all the traditions of the Romiſh church, and all their tenets and decrees, whether of the Popes or their councils, are to be ſtedfaſtly maintained. *Fred. Span. Elench. Controv. p.* 51.

ſelves conſidered, they have no great kindneſs for; but they are neceſſitated to entertain them in defence of that great, leading, darling opinion they firſt eſpouſed.

Thoſe that cry up, and trumpet abroad the ſovereign power of *free-will*, even without the preventing grace of God, enabling men to ſupernatural works, as if the *will* alone had eſcaped all damage by the fall, and Adam had not ſinned in that noble virgin-faculty. To defend this idol, which is the πρῶτον ψεῦδος, they are forced to oppugn and deny ſeveral other great and weighty truths, as particular, eternal election, the certainty of the ſaints perſeverance, the neceſſity of preventing grace in converſion: which errors are but the out-works raiſed in defence of that idol.

So in the baptiſmal controverſy, men would never have adventured to deny God's covenant with Abraham, to be a covenant of grace; or to aſſert the ceremonial law, ſo full of Chriſt, to be an Adam's covenant of works; and circumciſion, expreſly called *the ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith*, to be the condition of Adam's covenant. Much leſs would they place all the elect of God in Iſrael, at one and the ſame time, under the ſevereſt curſe and rigour of the law, and under the pure covenant of grace, were they not forced into theſe errors and abſurdities by dint of argument, in defence of their darling opinion.

Obſerv. 14. *Errors abound moſt, and ſpring faſteſt, in the times of the church's peace, liberty, and outward proſperity, under indulgent rulers. Arianiſm* ſprung up under *Conſtantine*'s mild government*.

Chriſtian, benevolent rulers are choice mercies and bleſſings to the church. Such as rule over men in the fear of God, are to the church, as well as civil ſtate, "like the light of the morning, when the ſun ariſeth; even a morning without clouds, "as the tender graſs ſpringing out of the earth by clear ſhining "after rain," 2 Sam. xxiii. 4.

But this, as well as other mercies, is liable to abuſe; and under the influences of indulgent governors, error, as well as truth, ſprings up, flowers and ſeeds. Perſecution gives check to the wantonneſs of mens opinions, and finds them other and better work to do. Caterpillars and locuſts are ſwept

* Euſebius records, That Arius Alexandrian began to vent his diſtracted hereſy at Alexandria, in the year of our Lord 324, and in the 15th year of the reign of Conſtantine.

away by the bitter east winds, but swarm in *halcyon* days, and fall upon every green thing. So that the church rides in this respect, more safely in the stormy sea, than in the calm harbour. Peace and prosperity is apt to cast its watchmen into a sleep; and whilst they sleep, the envious *one* soweth tears, Matth. xiii. 25.

It was under Constantine's benign government, that poison was poured out into the churches. The abuse of such an excellent mercy provokes the Lord to cut it short, and cause the clouds to gather again after the rain. We have found it so once and again (alas, that I must say again!) in this wanton and foolish nation. Professors could live quietly together, converse, fast, and pray in a Christian manner together, under common calamities and dangers: differences in opinion were suspended by consent. But no sooner do we feel a warm, sun-blast of liberty and peace, but it revives and heats our dividing lusts and corruptions, instead of our graces. The sheep of Christ fight with each other, though their furious pushing one at another is known to presage a change of weather.

Observation 15. *Errors, in the tender bud, and first spring of them, are comparatively shy and modest, to what they prove afterwards, when they have spread and rooted themselves into the minds of multitudes, and think it time to set up and justle for themselves in the world* *.

They usually begin in modest scruples, conscientious doubts and queries. But having once gotten many abetters, and, amongst them, some that have subtility and ability to plead and dispute their cause, they ruffle it out at another rate; glory in their numbers, piety and ability of their party; boast and glory in the conceited victories they atchieved over their opposers. The mask drops off its face, and it appears with a brow of brass, becomes insolent and turbulent, both in church and state. Of which it is easy to give many pregnant instances, in the Arians of old, and more recent errors, which I shall not at present be concerned with, lest I exasperate, whilst I seek to heal the wound.

† Should a man hear the sermons or private discourses of er-

* Eunomius, by advice of Eudoxus, for some time spread his heresy secretly, intricately, and ambiguously; but at length taking courage, he openly avowed in public assemlies what he heretically maintained. *Theodoret, book* 3. *c.* 29.

† The Donatists, in Augustine's time, modestly moved, That men might

rorists, whilst the design is but forming and projecting, he should meet with little to raise his jealousy. They speak in generals, and guard their discourses with political reserves. You shall not see, though you seem to see the tendency of their discourses. Hence the apostle saith, 2 Pet. ii. 1. παρεισάξουσι, *They shall privily* [or covertly] *bring in damnable heresies:* As the boy in Plutarch, being asked by a stranger, What is that you carry so closely under your cloak? wittily answered, You may well know that, I intend you shall not know it by my so carrying it.

Observ. 16. *Nothing gives more countenance and increase to error, than a weak and feeble defence of the truth against it* *.

The strength of error lies much in the weakness of the advocates and defendants of truth. Every friend of truth is not fit to make a champion for it. Many love it, and pray for it, that cannot defend and dispute for it. *I can die for the truth* (saith the martyr) *but I cannot dispute for it.* Zuinglius blamed Carolostadius for undertaking the controversy of that age, because (said he) *non habuit satis humerorum, his shoulders were too weak for the burthen.*

It can be said of few, as Cicero speaks of one, *Nullam unquam in disputationibus rem defendit, quam non probarit; nullum oppugnavit, quem non everterit: i. e.* He undertook no cause in disputation, which he could not defend; he opposed no adversary, but could overthrow him. Here is a rare and happy disputant, who can clear and carry every point of truth, of which he undertakes the defence. It were happy for the church, if the abilities and prudence of all her friends were commensurate and equal to their love and zeal. Every little foil, every weak

might not be compelled to live holy. *Coacta et invita pietas*, they mentioned it with dislike; but when grown in power, *facti insolentes orthodoxis inferebant*, insomuch that Dulcitius the tribune was fain to defend the orthodox against them with an army.

* Some not being sufficiently instructed in heavenly knowledge could not answer the opposers of truth, who objected, that it is a thing either impossible or incongruous that God should inclose himself within the womb of a woman, &c. by all which things, when they had not sufficient capacity or learning to defend truth and refute error, (for they had not thorough insight into the import and reason of such things) they were misled from the right way, corrupted heavenly knowledge, and composed to themselves a new system of doctrine that had no root or stability, *Lactan. book* 4. *chap.* 30. *concerning Heresies*,

or impertinent answer of a friend to truth, is quickly turned into a weapon to wound it the deeper.

Observ. 17. *Errors of judgment are not cured by compulsion and external force, but by rational conviction, and proper spiritual remedies.*

Bodily sufferings rather spread than cure intellectual errors. I deny not but fundamental heresies, breaking forth into open blasphemies against God, and seditions in the civil state, ought to be restrained. It is no way fit men should be permitted to go up and down the world with plague-sores running upon them. Nor do I understand why men should be more cautious to preserve their bodies than their souls. But I speak here of such errors as may consist with the foundations of the Christian faith, and are not destructive of civil government. They take the ready way to spread and perpetuate them, that think to root them out of the world by such improper and unwarrantable means as external force and violence. The wind never causes an earthquake, 'till it be pent in, and restrained from motion.

We neither find, nor can imagine, that those church or state Exorcists should ever be able to effect their end, who think to confine all the spirits of error within the circle of a severe uniformity. Fires, prisons, pillories, stigmatizings, mutilations, whippings, banishments, &c. are the Popish *topics* to confute errors. It is highly remarkable that the world, long ago, consented for the avoiding of dissent in judgment, to enslave themselves and their posterity to the most fatal and destructive heresy that ever it groaned under.

It is a rational and proper observation, long since made by Lactantius, *Quis mihi imponat necessitatem credendi quod nolim, vel non credendi, quod velim? i. e.* Who can force me to believe what I will not, or not to believe what I will? The rational and gentle spirit of the gospel, is the only proper and effectual method to cure the diseases of the mind.

Observ. 18. *Erroneous doctrines, producing divisions and fierce contentions amongst Christians, prove a fatal stumbling-block to the world, fix their prejudices, and obstruct their conversion to Christ* ‖.

They dissolve the lovely union of the saints, and thereby scare off the world from coming into the church. This is evi-

‖ Many enemies to Christianity, from hatred to the Christians for their abolishing the Gentile superstition, flocked to the Nicene synod that they might find some whom they might mock. *Say the Centurists.*

clearly implied in that prayer of Chriſt, John xvii. That all his people might be one, that the world might believe the Father had ſent him. There is, indeed, no juſt cauſe for any to take offence at the Chriſtian reformed religion, becauſe ſo many errors and hereſies ſpring up among the profeſſors of it, and divide them into ſo many ſects and parties; for, in all this, we find no more than what was predicted from the beginning, 1 Cor. xi. 18, 19. "I hear there be diviſions among you, and I partly "believe it: for there muſt be alſo hereſies among you," *&c.* And again, Acts xx. 30. "Alſo of your own ſelves ſhall men ariſe, "ſpeaking perverſe things, to draw away diſciples after them"*.

The very ſame things ſtrongly confirm the Chriſtian religion, which wicked men improve to the reproach and prejudice of it. When Celſus objected to the Chriſtians the variety and contrariety of their opinions: ſaying, *Were we willing to turn Chriſtians, we know not of what party to be, ſeeing you all pretend to Chriſt, and yet differ ſo much from one another.* Tertullian, the Chriſtian Apologiſt, made him this wiſe and pertinent reply, "We are not troubled that hereſies are come, ſeeing it was "predicted that they muſt come †." Theſe things deſtroy not the credibility of the Chriſtian religion, but increaſe and confirm it, by evidencing to the world the truth and certainty of Chriſt's predictions (which were quite beyond all human foreſight) that as ſoon as his doctrine ſhould be propagated, and a church raiſed by it, errors and hereſies ſhould ſpring up among them, for the trial of their faith and conſtancy.

Nevertheleſs, this no way excuſes the ſinfulneſs of errors and diviſions in the church. Chriſt's prediction neither infuſes, nor excuſes the evil predicted by him: for what he elſewhere ſpeaks of ſcandals, is as true in this caſe of errors; "Theſe things "muſt come to paſs, but wo be to that man by whom they come."

Obſerv. 19. *How ſpecious and taking ſoever the pretences of error be, and how long ſoever they maintain themſelves in eſteem among men, they are ſure to end in the loſs and ſhame of their authors and abettors at laſt* ‡.

* Above all things it is proper for us to know that Chriſt himſelf and his ambaſſadors have foretold that many ſects and Hereſies ſhould ariſe, which would break the peace of his ſacred body, and have admoniſhed us to watch with the greateſt prudence, leſt at any time we ſhould fall into the nets and ſnares of that adverſary of ours, with whom God requires us to contend. *Lactan. book* 4. *chap.* 30.

† *Hereſes non dolemus veniſſe, quia novimus eſſe predictas,*

‡ Athanaſius writes, that after the ſhameful death of Arius, very many

Truth is a rock that the waves of error daſh againſt, and evermore return in froth and foam: Yea, they foam out their own ſhame, ſaith the apoſtle, Jude 13. What Tacitus ſpake of crafty counſels, I may as truly apply to crafty errors: "They "are pleaſant in their beginning, difficult in their manage- "ment, and ſad in their event and iſſue *."

Suppoſe a man have union with Chriſt, yet his errors are but ſo much hay, wood, ſtraw, ſtubble, built, or rather endeavoured to be built upon a foundation of gold; this the fiery trial burns up; the author of them ſuffers loſs; and though himſelf may be ſaved, yet ſo as by fire, 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13, 14, 15. the meaning is, he makes a narrow eſcape. As a man that leaps out of an houſe on fire, from a window or battlement, with great difficulty ſaves his life; juſt ſo *erroriſts* ſhall be glad to quit their erroneous opinions, which they have taken ſo much pains to build, and draw others into: and then, oh what a ſhame muſt it be for a good man to think, how many days and nights have I worſe than waſted to defend and propagate an error, which might have been employed in a cloſer ſtudy of Chriſt, and mine own heart! Keckerman relates a ſtory of a *vocal ſtatue*, which was thirty years a making by a cunning artiſt, which, by the motion of its tongue with little wheels, wires, *&c.* could articulate the ſound, and pronounce an entire ſentence. This *ſtatue* ſaluting Aquinas, ſurprized him, and at one ſtroke he utterly deſtroyed the curious *machine*, which exceedingly troubled the fond owner of it, and made him ſay, with much concernment, "Thou haſt at one ſtroke de- "ſtroyed the ſtudy and labour of thirty years †."

Beſide, what ſhame and trouble muſt it be to the zealous promoters of errors, not only to caſt away ſo vainly and unprofitably their own time and ſtrength, which is bad enough, but alſo to enſnare and allure the ſouls of others into the ſame, or worſe miſchief: for though God may ſave and recover you, thoſe that have been miſled by you, may periſh.

Obſerv. 20. *If ever errors be cured, and the peace and unity of the church eſtabliſhed, men muſt be convinced of, and acquainted with the occaſions and cauſes both within and without themſelves, from whence their errors do proceed;*

many of thoſe who had been deceived by him returned to ſoundneſs in the faith.

* *Conſilia callida prima ſpecie læta, tractatu dura, eventu triſtia.*

† Keck. Phyſ. p. 16. Albertus Magnus. *Uno ictu opus triginta annorum deſtruxiſti.*

and muſt both know, and apply the proper rules and remedies for the prevention or cure of them.

There is much difference betwixt an occaſion, and a proper cauſe; theſe two are heedfully to be diſtinguiſhed. Critical and exact hiſtorians, as Polybius and Tacitus, diſtinguiſh betwixt the ἀρχὰ, and the αἰτια, the beginning occaſions, and the real cauſes of a war; and ſo we ought, in this caſe of errors, carefully to diſtinguiſh them. The moſt excellent and innocent things in the world, ſuch as the Scriptures of truth, the liberty of Chriſtians, the tranquillity and peace of the church (as you will hear anon) may, by the ſubtilty of Satan working in conjunction with the corruptions of mens hearts, become the occaſions, but can never be the proper culpable cauſes of errors.

Accordingly, having made theſe twenty remarks upon the nature and growth of errors (which cannot ſo well be brought within the following rules of method) I ſhall, in the next place, proceed in the diſcovery both of the mere occaſion, as alſo of the proper culpable cauſes of errors, together with the proper preventives, and moſt effectual remedies, placed together in the following order.

Divine Permiſſion.

The occaſion. The holy God, who is a God of truth, Deut. xxxii. 4. and hateth errors, Rev. ii. 6. the God of order, and hates confuſions and ſchiſms in his church, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. is yet pleaſed to permit errors and hereſies to ariſe, without whoſe permiſſion they could never ſpring. And this he doth for the trial of his people's faith and conſtancy, and for a ſpiritual puniſhment upon ſome men for the abuſe of his known truths; and by the permiſſion of theſe evils, he advanceth his own glory, and the good of his church and people. Auguſtine anſwers that queſtion, Why doth not God, ſince he hates errors, ſweep them out of the world? Becauſe (ſaith he) it is an act of greater power to bring good out of evil, than not to ſuffer evils to be at all.

Satan's deſign in errors, is to cloud and darken God's name and precious truths; to deſtroy the beauty, ſtrength, and order of the church. But God's ends in permitting and ſending errors, are (1.) To plague and puniſh men for their abuſe of light, 2 Theſſ. ii. 11. "For this cauſe God ſhall ſend them "ſtrong deluſions," &c. (2.) To prove and try the ſincerity and conſtancy of our hearts, Deut. xiii. 1, 3. 1 Cor. xi. 19 And laſtly, By theſe things the ſaints are awakened to a more diligent ſearch of the Scriptures, which are the more critically read and examined upon the trial of ſpirits and doctrines by them,

1 John iv. 1. "Believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits." And Rev. ii. 2. "Thou haſt tried them that ſay they are apoſtles," &c.

The prevention. Though hereſies and errors muſt (for the reaſons aſſigned) break forth into the world, and God will turn them eventually into his own glory, and the benefit of his church; yet it is a dreadful judgment to be delivered over to a ſpirit of error, to be the authors and abettors of them. This is a judicial ſtroke of God, and as ever we hope to eſcape, and ſtand clear out of the way of it, let us carefully ſhun theſe three following cauſes and provocations thereof.

(1.) Want of love to the truth, which God hath made to ſhine about us in the means, or into us, by actual illumination, under the means of knowledge. 2 Theſſ. ii. 10, 11. "Becauſe "they received not the love of the truth, God gave them up "to ſtrong deluſions." They are juſtly plagued with error, that ſlight truth. Falſe doctrines are fit plagues for falſe hearts.

(2.) Beware of pride and wantonneſs of mind. 'Tis not ſo much the weakneſs as the wantonneſs of the mind, which provokes God to inflict this judgment. None likelier to make ſeducers than boaſters, Jude 16. Arius gloried, that God had revealed ſome things to him, which were hidden from the apoſtles themſelves. Simon Magus boaſted himſelf to be the mighty power of God. The erroneous Phariſees loved the praiſes of men. When the Papiſt reproached Luther that he affected to have his diſciples called Lutherans, he replied, * "He diſ- "dained that the children of Chriſt ſhould be called by ſo vile "a name as his."

(3.) Beware you neglect not prayer, to be kept ſound in your judgments, and guided by the Spirit into all truth, Pſal. cxix. 10. "With my whole heart have I ſought thee: O let "me not wander, *or err*, from thy commandments." This do, and you are ſafe from ſuch a judicial tradition.

The firſt cauſe. We ſhall next ſpeak of the cauſes of error found in the evil diſpoſitions of the ſubjects, which prepare and incline them to receive erroneous doctrines and opinions, and even catch at the occaſions, and leaſt ſparkles of temptation, as dry tinder: and amongſt theſe is found,

(1.) A perverſe wrangling humour at the pretended *obſcurity* of the Scriptures. The Romiſh party ſnatch at this occaſion, and make it the proper cauſe, when, indeed, it is but a picked

* Luther ſaid, not ſo, O fool, not ſo, for I deſire that my name be concealed.

occasion of the errors and mistakes among men. They tell us, the Scriptures are so difficult, obscure, and perplexed, that if private men will trust to them as their only guide, they will inevitably run into errors, and their only relief is to give up their souls to the conduct of their church; whereas, indeed, the true cause of error is not so much in the obscurity of the word, as in the corruption of the mind, 1 Tim. vi. 5. 2 Tim. iii. 8.

We do acknowledge there are in the Scriptures, τινα δυσνοητα, και τινα δυσερμηνευτα, some things hard to be understood, 2 Pet. iii. 16. the sublime and mysterious nature of the matter rendering it so; and some things hard to be interpreted, from the manner of expression; as indeed all mystical parts of Scripture, and prophetical predictions are, and ought to be delivered. The Spirit of God this way designedly casts a veil over them, till the proper season of their revelation and accomplishment be come. Besides (as the learned Glossius observes) in Paul's style, there are found some peculiar words, and forms of speech, which ordinary rules of grammar take no notice, nor give any parallel examples of: as, *to be buried with Christ; to be baptized into his death;* to which I may add, *to be circumcised in him*, &c. There are also multitudes of words found in Scripture, of various and vastly different significations: and accordingly there is a diversity, and, sometimes, a contrariety of senses, given of them by expositors; which, to an humourist, or quarrelsome wit, gives an occasion to vent his errors with a plausible appearance of Scripture-consent. And indeed Tertullian saith,* "The Scriptures are so disposed that heretics may pick occasions;" and those that will not be satisfied may be hardened. See Mark iv. 11, 12.

But all this notwithstanding, the great and necessary things to our salvation are so perspicuously and plainly revealed in the Scriptures, that even babes in Christ do apprehend and understand them, Matth. xi. 25. 1 Cor. i. 27, 28, 29. And though there be difficulties in other points more remote from the foundation; yet the Spirit of God is not to be accused, but rather his wisdom to be admired herein. For (1.) this serves to excite our most intense study and diligence, which, by this difficulty, is made necessary, Prov. ii. 3, 4, 5. The very prophets, yea, the very angels search into these things; 1 Pet. i. 11, 12.

* *Non periclitor dicere ipsas scripturas ita dispositas esse, ut materiam submininistrarent hæreticis.*

(2.) Hereby a ſtanding miniſtry in the church is made neceſſary, Nehem. viii. 8. Eph iv 11, 12, 13. So that to pretend obſcurity of Scripture to be the culpable cauſe of error (when, indeed, the fault is in ourſelves) this is too much like our father Adam, who would implicitely accuſe God, to excuſe himſelf; he laid it upon the woman which God gave him, and we upon the Scriptures which God hath given us.

The Remedies.

The proper *remedies* and *preventives* in this caſe, are a heedful attendance to, and practice of theſe *rules*.

Rule I. Let all obſcure and difficult texts of Scripture be conſtantly examined and expounded according to the analogy or proportion of faith, which is St. Paul's own rule, Rom. xii. 6. "Let "him that propheſieth (*i. e.* expoundeth the Scriptures in the "church) do it according to the proportion of faith." The analogy or proportion of faith, is what is taught plainly and uniformly in the whole Scriptures of the Old and New Teſtament, as the rule of our faith and obedience. Whilſt we carefully and ſincerely attend hereunto, we are ſecured from ſinful corrupting the word of God. Admit of no ſenſe which interferreth with this proportion of faith. If men have no regard to this, but take liberty to rend off a ſingle text from the body of truth, to which it belongs, and put a peculiar interpretation upon it, which is abſonous and diſcordant to other Scriptures, what woful work will they quickly make?

Give but a Papiſt liberty to take that ſcripture, James ii. 24. out of the frame of ſcripture, "A man is juſtified by works, and "and not by faith only;" and expound it without regard to the tenor of the goſpel-doctrine of juſtification in Paul's epiſtles to the Romans and Galatians, and a groſs error ſtarts up immediately. Give but a Socinian the like liberty to practiſe upon, John xiv. 28. and a groſs hereſy ſhall preſently look with an orthodox face.

Rule II. Never put a new ſenſe upon words of ſcripture, in favour of your pre-conceived notions and opinions, nor wreſt it from its general and common uſe and ſenſe. This is not to interpret, but to rack the ſcriptures as that word στρεβλοῦσι ſignifies, 2 Pet. iii. 16. as * Hiéron againſt Ruff ſpeaks. We are not to make the ſcriptures ſpeak what we think, but what the prophet or apoſtle thought, whom we interpret. In 1 Cor. v. 11. 14. we meet with the word [*holy*] applied to the children

* It is the part of an interpreter to explain what the author thought whom he interprets, and not what he himſelf thinks.

of believers: That word is above five-hundred-times uſed for a ſtate of ſeparation to God; therefore to make it ſignify, in that place, nothing but legitimacy, is a bold and daring practiſing upon the ſcripture.

Rule III. Whenever you meet with an obſcure place of ſcripture, let the context of that ſcripture be diligently and throughly ſearched; for it is uſual with God to ſet up ſome light there, to guide us through the obſcurity of a particular text. And there is much truth in the obſervation of the Rabbins *, "There "is no ſcruple or objection in the law, but it hath a ſolution "at the ſide of it."

Rule IV. Let one teſtament freely caſt its light upon the other; and let not men undervalue or reject an Old Teſtament text, as no way uſeful to clear and eſtabliſh a New Teſtament point of faith or duty. Each Teſtament reflects light upon the other. The Jews reject the New Teſtament, and many among us ſinfully ſlight the Old: but without the help of both, we can never underſtand the mind of God in either. 'Tis a good rule in the Civil Law, † "We muſt inſpect the whole law, to know "the ſenſe of any particular law."

Rule V. Have a due regard to that ſenſe given of obſcure places of ſcripture, which hath not only the current ſenſe of learned expoſitors, but alſo naturally agrees with the ſcope of the place. A careleſs neglect and diſregard to this, is juſtly blamed by the apoſtle, 1 Tim. i. 7.

Cauſe 2. A ſecond evil temper in the ſubject, diſpoſing and inclining men to receive and ſuck in erroneous doctrines and opinions, is the abuſe of that juſt and due *Chriſtian Liberty* ‡ allowed by Chriſt to all his people, to read, examine, and judge the ſenſe of ſcriptures with a private judgment of diſcretion.

This is a glorious acquiſition, and bleſſed fruit of reformation, to vindicate and recover that juſt right, and gracious grant made to us by Chriſt and the apoſtles, out of the injurious hands of our Popiſh enemies, who had uſurped and invaded it. The exerciſe of this *liberty*, is, at once, a duty commanded by Chriſt, and commended in ſcripture. 'Tis commanded by Chriſt, John v. 39. *Search the ſcriptures*, ſaith Chriſt to the

* *Nulla eſt objectio in lege, quae non habet ſolutionem in latere.*

† *Turpe eſt de lege judicare, tota lege nondum inſpecta.*

‡ The Anabaptiſts controverſy ſprung up in the laſt age in many places in Europe from Montzero a Saxon with his followers in the year 1521. through occaſion of a book wrote by Luther on Chriſtian Liberty. *Fred. Spanh. Elench. Contr. p.* 95.

people, 1 Cor. x. 15. "I ſpeak as to wiſe men judge you what "I ſay." And the exercise of this private judgment of diſcretion by the people is highly commended by St. Paul in the Bereans, Acts xvii. 11. "Theſe were more noble than thoſe in "Theſſalonica, in that they received the word with all readi-"neſs of mind, and ſearched the ſcriptures daily, whether *thoſe* "things were ſo." This liberty is not allowed in that latitude in any religion, as it is in the Chriſtian religion; nor enjoyed in its fulneſs, as it is in the reformed religion; whoſe glory it is, that it allows its principles and doctrines to be critically examined and tried of all men, by the rule of the word, as well knowing, the more it is ſifted and ſearched by its profeſſors, the more they will be ſtill confirmed and ſatisfied in the truth of it.

But yet this gracious and juſt liberty of Chriſtians ſuffers a double abuſe; one from the Popiſh enemies, who injuriouſly reſtrain and deny it to the people: Another by Proteſtants themſelves, who ſinfully ſtretch and extend it beyond the juſt degree and meaſure in which Chriſt allows it to them.

The Pope injuriouſly reſtrains it, diſcerning the danger that muſt neceſſarily follow the conceſſion of ſuch a liberty to the people, to compare his ſuperſtitious and erroneous doctrines with the rule of the word.

St. Peter, in 2 Pet. i. 19. tells the people, they have a more ſure word of prophecy, whereunto they do well that they take heed. Certainly the Pope forgot either that he was Peter's ſucceſſor; or that ever St. Peter told the people they did well to make uſe of that liberty which he denies them. Mr. Pool tells us of a Spaniard that uſed this expreſſion to an Engliſh merchant, You people of England (ſaith he) *are happy; you have liberty to ſee with your own eyes, and to examine the doctrines delivered to you, upon which your everlaſting life depends; but we dare not ſay our ſouls are our own, but are commanded to believe whatever our teachers tell us, be it never ſo unreaſonable or ridiculous.* This is a moſt injurious and ſinful reſtraint upon it on the one ſide.

And then ſecondly, 'Tis too frequently abuſed, by ſtretching it beyond Chriſt's allowance and intendment upon the other ſide; when every ignorant and confident perſon ſhall, under pretence of liberty granted by Chriſt, rudely break in upon the ſacred text, diſtort, violate, and abuſe the ſcriptures at pleaſure, by putting ſuch ſtrange and foreign ſenſes upon them, as the ſpirit of God never meant or intended *.

* Prov. viii. 22. Which words Epiphanius writes, gave the firſt occaſion to Arius to form his Hereſy againſt the Son of God.

How often have I heard that ſcripture, Micah iv. 10. "They "ſhall be brought even to Babylon," confidently interpreted for *almoſt*, but not full home to *Babylon*, againſt the very grammar of the text, and the truth of the hiſtory? And ſo again, that place, Iſa. lviii. 8. "The glory of the Lord ſhall be thy "rere-ward," through ignorance of the word, read *rere-ward*, that is, a double reward to his people? But theſe are ſmall matters, compared with thoſe groſſer abuſes of ſcripture by the ignorant and unlearned, which prejudice truth, and too much countenance Popiſh reproaches.

The Remedies.

The proper way to prevent and remedy this miſchief, is not by depriving any man of his juſt liberty, either to read, or judge for himſelf, what God ſpeaks in his word, and think that way to cure errors; that were the ſame thing as to cut off the head, to cure an head-ach. Leave that ſinful policy with the falſe religion; let thoſe only that know they do evil, be afraid of coming to the light: But the proper courſe of preventing the miſchiefs that come this way, is by labouring to bound and contain Chriſtians within thoſe limits Chriſt himſelf hath ſet unto this liberty which he hath granted them. And theſe are ſuch as follow.

Limitation I. Though Chriſt hath indulged, to the meaneſt and weakeſt Chriſtian, a liberty to read and judge of the ſcriptures for himſelf; yet he hath neither thereby, nor therewith granted him a liberty publicly to expound and preach the word to others: That's quite another thing.

Every man that can read the ſcriptures, and judge of their ſenſe, is not thereby preſently made Chriſt's commiſſion-officer, publicly and authoritatively to preach and inculcate the ſame to others: Two things are requiſite to ſuch an employment, *viz. Proper qualifications*, 1 Tim. iii. *And a ſolemn call or deſignation*, Rom. x. 14, 15. The miniſtry is a diſtinct office, Acts xx. 17, 28. 1 Theſſ. v. 12. and none but qualified and ordained perſons can authoritatively preach the word, 2 Tim i. 6. 1 Tim. iv. 14. 1 Tim. v. 22.

Chriſtians may privately edify one another by reading the ſcriptures, communicating their ſenſe one to another of them, admoniſhing, counſelling, reproving one another in a private, fraternal way, at ſeaſons wherein they interfere not with more public duties: But for every one that hath confidence enough (and the ignorant uſually are beſt ſtocked with it) to aſſume a liberty without due qualification or call to expound and give the ſenſe of ſcripture, and pour forth his crude and unſtudied

notions, as the pure ſenſe and meaning of God's Spirit in the ſcriptures; this is what Chriſt never allowed, and through this flood-gate errors have broken in, and overflowed the church of God, to the great ſcandal of religion, and confirmation of Popiſh enemies.

Limitation. II. Though there be no part of ſcripture ſhut up or reſtrained from the knowledge or uſe of any Chriſtian, yet Jeſus Chriſt hath recommended to Chriſtians of different abilities, the ſtudy of ſome parts of ſcripture, rather than others, as more proper and agreeable to their age and ſtature in religion.

Chriſtians are by the apoſtle ranked into three claſſes, *fathers, young-men,* and *little children,* 1 John ii. 13. and accordingly the wiſdom of Chriſt has directed to that ſort of food which is proper to either: For there is, in the word, all ſorts of food ſuitable to all ages in Chriſt; there is both *milk* for *babes,* and *ſtrong meat* for *grown Chriſtians,* Heb. v. 13, 14. Thoſe that are unſkilful in the word of righteouſneſs, ſhould feed upon *milk,* that is, the eaſy, plain, but moſt nutritive and pleaſant practical doctrines of the goſpel. But *ſtrong meat* (ſaith he) that is, the more abſtruſe, deep, and myſterious truths, belongeth to them that are of full age, even thoſe who, by reaſon of uſe, have their ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil; that is, truth and error. To the ſame purpoſe he ſpeaks, 1 Cor. iii. 2. "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat; for hitherto "ye were not able to bear it.

Art thou a weak unſtudied Chriſtian? a babe in Chriſt? Then the eaſier, and more nutritive milk of plain goſpel doctrine is fitter for thee, and will do thee more good, than the ſtronger meat of profound and more myſterious points; or the bones of controverſy, which are too hard for thee to deal with.

God hath bleſſed this age with great variety of ſound and allowed expoſitors in our own language, by the diligent ſtudy of which, and prayer for the illumination and guidance of the ſpirit, you may not only attain unto the true ſenſe and meaning of the more plain and obvious; but alſo unto greater knowledge, and clearer inſight into the more obſcure and controverted parts of ſcripture.

Cauſe III. There is alſo another evil diſpoſition in the ſubject, rendring it eaſily receptive of errors, and that is ſpiritual *Slothfulneſs* and careleſneſs in a due and ſerious ſearch of the whole ſcripture, with a ſedate and rational conſideration of every part and particle therein; which may give us any, tho' the leaſt light,

to underſtand the mind of God in thoſe obſcure and difficult points we ſearch after the knowledge of.

Truth lies deep, as the rich veins of gold do, Prov. ii. If we will get the treaſure, we muſt not only *beg*, as he directs, ver. 3. but *dig* alſo, ver. 4. elſe, as he ſpeaks, Prov. xiv. 23. "The talk of the lips tends only to poverty." We are not to take up with that which lies uppermoſt, and next at hand upon the ſurface of the text; but to ſearch with the moſt ſedate and conſiderative mind into all parts of the written word, examining every text which hath any reſpect to the truth we are ſearching for, heedfully to obſerve the ſcope, antecedents, and conſequents, and to value every *apex*, *tittle*, and *iota*; for each of theſe are of divine authority, Mat. v. 18. and ſometimes greater weight is laid upon a ſmall word, yea upon the addition or change of a letter in a word, as appears in the names Abram and Sarai.

It will require ſome ſtrength of mind, and great ſedulity, to lay all parts of ſcripture before us, and to compare words with words, and things with things, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 Cor. ii. 13. "Comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual." And though it be true that ſome important doctrines, as that of juſtification by faith, are methodically diſpoſed, and thoroughly cleared and ſettled in one and the ſame context; yet it is as true, that very many other points of faith and duty are not ſo digeſted, but are delivered *ſparſim*, here a little, and there a little, as he ſpeaks, Iſa. xxviii. 10. You muſt not think to find all that belongs to one head or point of faith, or duty, laid together in a ſyſtem or common place, in ſcripture; but ſcattered abroad in ſeveral places, ſome in the Old Teſtament, and ſome in the New, at a great diſtance from one another.

Now, in our ſearches and inquiries after the full and ſatisfying knowledge of the will of God in ſuch points, it is neceſſary that the whole word of God be throughly ſearched, and all thoſe parcels brought together to an interview. *Ex. Gr.*

If a man would ſee the entire diſcovery that was made of Chriſt, to the fathers, under the Old Teſtament, he ſhall not find it laid together in any one prophet; but ſhall find that one ſpeaks to one part of it, and another to another.

Moſes gives the firſt general hint of it, Gen. iii. 15. "The "ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's head." But then, if you would know more particularly of whoſe ſeed, according to the fleſh, he ſhould come, you muſt turn to Gen. xxii. 18. "In thy ſeed (ſaith God to Abraham) ſhall all nations of the

"earth be bleſſed." And if you yet doubt what ſeed God means there, you muſt go to the apoſtle, Gal. iii. 16. *To thy ſeed*, which is Chriſt. If you would further know the place of his nativity, the prophet Micah muſt inform you of that, Mic. v. 2. it ſhould be Bethlehem Ephrata. If you enquire of the quality of his parent, another prophet gives you that, *Iſa.* vii. 14. "Behold a virgin ſhall conceive, and bear a ſon, and call "his name Immanuel." If the time of his birth be inquired after, Moſes and Daniel muſt inform you of that, Gen. xlix. 10. Dan. ix. 24.

So under the New Teſtament, If a man inquire about the change of the ſabbath, he muſt not expect to find a formal repeal of the ſeventh day, and an expreſs inſtitution of the firſt day in its room; but he is to conſider,

Firſt, What the Evangeliſt ſpeaks, Mark ii. 28. That Chriſt is Lord of the Sabbath, and ſo had power, not only to diſpenſe with it, but to change it.

Secondly, That on the firſt day of the week Chriſt roſe from the dead, Mat. xxviii. 1, 2. And that this is that great day, foretold to be the day to be ſolemnized upon that account, Pſal. cxviii. 24.

Thirdly, That, accordingly, the firſt day of the week is emphatically ſtiled the Lord's day, Rev. i. 10. where you find his own name written upon it.

Fourthly, You ſhall find this was the day on which the apoſtles and primitive Chriſtians aſſembled together for the ſtated and ſolemn performance of public worſhip, John xx. 19. and other public church-acts and duties, 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. And ſo by putting together, and conſidering all theſe particulars, we draw a juſt concluſion, That it is the will of God, that ſince the reſurrection of Chriſt, the firſt day of the week ſhould be obſerved as the Chriſtian-ſabbath.

In like manner, as for the baptizing of believers infants; we are not to expect it in the expreſs words of a New Teſtament inſtitution, or command, that infants, under the goſpel, ſhould be baptized; but God hath left us to gather ſatisfaction about his will, and our duty, in that point, by comparing and conſidering the ſeveral ſcriptures of the Old and New Teſtament which relate to that matter; which, if we be impartial and conſiderative, we may do.

Firſt, By conſidering, that by God's expreſs command, Gen. xvii. 9. 10. the infant-ſeed of his people were taken into covenant with their parents, and the then ſign of that covenant commanded to be applied to them.

Secondly, That though the ſign be altered, the promiſe and covenant is ſtill the ſame, and runs, as it did before, to believers and their children, Acts ii. 38, 39.

Thirdly, That the foederal holineſs of our children is plainly aſſerted under the New Teſtament, 1 Cor. vii. 14. Rom. xi. 16.

Fourthly, We ſhall further find, that baptiſm ſucceeds in the room of circumciſion; and that, by an argument drawn from the completeneſs of our privileges under the New Teſtament, no way inferior, but rather more extenſive than thoſe of the Jews, Col. ii. 10, 11, 12.

Fifthly, We ſhall find that upon the converſion of any maſter or parent, the whole houſhold were baptized. By putting all theſe things, with ſome others, together, we may arrive to the deſired ſatisfaction about the will of God in this matter.

But ſome men want abilities, and others are too ſluggiſh and lazy to gather together, compare and weigh all theſe, and many more hints and diſcoveries of the mind of God, which would give much light unto this point; but they take an eaſier and cheaper way to ſatisfy themſelves with what lies upper-moſt upon the ſurface of ſcripture, and ſo, as it were by conſent, let go, and loſe their own, and their children's bleſſed and invaluable privileges, for want of a little labour and patience to ſearch the ſcriptures: A folly which few would be guilty of, if but a ſmall earthly inheritance were concerned therein.

The Remedies.

To cure this ſpiritual ſluggiſhneſs, and awaken us to the moſt ſerious and diligent ſearch after the will of God in ſuch controverſial and doubtful points, that we may not neglect the ſmalleſt hint given us about it, the following conſiderations will be found of great uſe and weight.

Conſider. 1. The moſt ſedate, impartial, and diligent inquiries after the will of God revealed in his word, is a duty expreſly enjoined by his ſovereign command, which immediately, and indiſpenſibly binds the conſcience of every Chriſtian to the practice of it.

Remarkable is that text to this purpoſe, Rom. xii. 2. "And "be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the "renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, "and acceptable, and perfect will of God." Here you find this duty, not only aſſociated with, but made the very end of our non-conformity to the world, and renovation of our minds, the very things which conſtitute a Chriſtian.

And to ſweeten our pains in this work, that will of God, for the diſcovery whereof we ſearch, is preſented to us under three illuſtrious and alluring properties; *viz. good, acceptable,* and *perfect*. *Good* it muſt needs be, becauſe the will and eſſence of God, the chief good, are not two things, but one and the ſame. And *perfect* it muſt needs be, becauſe it is the beam and ſtandard by which the actions of all reaſonable creatures ought to be weighed and tried, as to the moral good or evil of them. And being both good and perfect, how can it chuſe but, upon both accounts, be highly *acceptable* and grateful to an upright ſoul, as that *epithet* εὐάρεστον, there imports. *Search the ſcriptures*, ſaith Chriſt, John v. 39. *To the law, and to the teſtimony*, ſaith the prophet, Iſa. viii. 20. This is not matter of mere Chriſtian liberty, but commanded duty; and at our peril be it, if we neglect it.

Conſider. 2. No act of ours can be good and acceptable to the Lord, further than it is agreeable to his will revealed in the word.

No man can be a rule to himſelf. He can be no more his own rule than his own end. One man cannot be a rule to another. The beſt of men, and their actions, and examples, are only ſo far a rule of imitation to us, as they themſelves are ruled by the divine revealed will, 1 Cor. xi. 1. uncommanded acts of worſhip are abominable to God, and highly dangerous to ourſelves; they kindle the fire of his jealouſy, to the ruin and deſtruction of the preſumptuous ſinner, Lev. x. 1, 2. So that if the beauty, and excellency of the will of God be not enough to allure us, the danger of acting, without the knowledge of it, may juſtly terrify us.

Conſider. 3. In this duty we tread in the footſteps of the wiſeſt, and holieſt men that ever went to heaven before us.

It is not only the characteriſtical note of a good man, Pſal. i. 2. but it has been the conſtant practice of the moſt eminent believers in all ages. The greateſt prophets, who had this advantage of us, that they were the organs, or inſpired inſtruments of diſcovering the will of God to others, yet were not excuſed from, neither did they neglect to ſearch it diligently themſelves, 1 Pet. i. 10, 11. Daniel, that great favourite of heaven, who had the viſions and revelations of God; yet he himſelf diligently ſearched the written word, in order to the diſcovery of the mind of God, Dan. ix. 2.

Conſider. 4. Every diſcovery of the will of God, by fervent prayer, diligent, and impartial ſearch of the Scriptures, and all

other allowed helps, gives the higheſt pleaſure the mind of man is capable of in this world.

If Archimedes, upon the diſcovery of a mathematical truth, was ſo tranſported, and raviſhed, that he cried out, εὕρηκα, εὕρηκα, *I have found it, I have found it*; what pleaſure then muſt the inveſtigation and diſcovery of a divine truth give to a ſanctified ſoul! "Thy words were found of me (ſaith Jeremiah) and I "did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing "of my heart," Jer. xv. 16. as pleaſant food to a famiſhed man; for now conſcience is quieted, comforted and cheered, in the way of duty. A man walks not at adventure with God, as that word ſignifies, Lev. xxvi. 40, 41. but hath the pleaſant directive light of the word and will of God, ſhining ſweetly upon the path of his duty.

Conſider. 5. By this means you ſhall find your faith greatly confirmed in the truth of the Scriptures.

The ſweet conſent and beautiful harmony of all the parts of the written word, is a great argument of its divinity; and this you will clearly diſcern, when, by a due ſearch, you ſhall find things that ly at the remoteſt diſtance, to conſpire and conſent in one, and one part caſting light, as well as adding ſtrength, to another. Thus you ſhall find, *Vetus teſtamentum in novo revelatum, et novum in vetere velatum*; the New Teſtament vailed in the Old, and the Old revealed in the New: and that ſuch a conſent of things, ſo diſtant in time and place, can never be the project and invention of man.

Conſider. 6. The diligent and impartial ſearch and inquiry after the will of God, out of no other deſign than to pleaſe him in the whole courſe of our duties, will turn to us for a teſtimony of the integrity and ſincerity of our hearts.

Thy word (ſaid David) *have I hid in my heart, that I might not ſin againſt thee.* And God will not hide his will from thoſe that thus ſeek to know it. If men would apply themſelves to ſearch the word by frequent prayer, and fixed meditations, upon ſo pure a deſign, not bringing their prejudiced or prepoſſeſſed minds unto it; the ſpirit of the Lord would guide them into all truth, and keep them out of dangerous and deſtructive errors.

Cauſe 4. Beſides the ſlothfulneſs of the mind, there is found in many perſons another evil diſpoſition preparing them eaſily to receive erroneous impreſſions; namely, the INSTABILITY, and fickleneſs of the judgment, and unſettledneſs of mind about the truth of the goſpel.

Of this the apoſtle warns us, Eph. iv. 14. "That we hence-

" forth be no more children, toſſed to and fro, and carried " about with every wind of doctrine, by the ſlight of men, " and cunning craftineſs whereby they lie in wait to deceive." None are ſo conſtant, and ſteady in the profeſſion of the truth, as thoſe that are fully convinced of, and well ſatisfied with the grounds of it. Every profeſſor, like every ſhip at ſea, ſhould have an διορυσήριγμον, a ballaſt and ſteadineſs of his own, 2 Pet. iii. 17. ready, and prepared to render a reaſon of the hope that is in him, 1 Pet. iii. 15. able, upon all occaſions, to give an account of thoſe inward motives which conſtrained his aſſent to the truth.

He that profeſſeth a truth ignorantly, cannot be rationally ſuppoſed to adhere to it conſtantly. He that is but half convinced of a truth, when he engages in the profeſſion of it, muſt needs be δίψυχος ἀνὴρ, a double-minded man, as the apoſtle calls him, Jam. i. 8. half the mind hangs one way, and half another, and ſo it is eaſily moveable this way or that, with the leaſt breath of temptation. And hence it comes to paſs they are ſo often at a loſs about their duty, and their practice; for, *Animi volutatio pendentem reddit vitam; i. e.* a doubtful mind muſt needs make a ſtaggering and uncertain practice.

Erroneous teachers are called wandering *ſtars*, Jude 13. which keep no certain courſe, as the fixed *ſtars* do, but are ſometimes nearer, and ſometimes remoter one from another. Thus *errorists* firſt imbibe unſettled opinions, and then diſcover them in their inconſtant practices. Bertius wrote a book, *de Apoſtaſia Sanctorum*, and ſoon after turned Papiſt. The Socinians, and Libertines teach, that a man of any perſuaſion, in religion, may be ſaved, ſo that he walk not contrary to his own light: ſuch doctrine directly tends to Scepticiſm in religion.

And this inſtability of the judgment proceeds either from *hypocriſy* or *weakneſs*. Sometimes from *hypocriſy*: All hypocrites are double-minded men. Jam. iv. 8. " The double-" minded man (that is, the *hypocrite*) is unſtable in all his " ways:" one of that number was not aſhamed to ſay, *Se duas habere animas in eodem corpore, unam Deo dicatam, alteram unicuique qui illam vellet: i. e.* That he had two ſouls in one body, one for God, and another for whoſoever would have it.

Sometimes inſtability of the mind is the effect only of weakneſs in the judgment, proceeding merely from want of age, and growth in Chriſt, not having as yet attained ſenſes exerciſed to diſcern both good and evil, Heb. v. 14. they are but children in Chriſt, and children are eaſy and credulous creatures, Eph. iv. 14. preſently taken with a new toy, and as ſoon weary of it;

such a wavering, and unstable temper, invites temptation, and falls an easy prey into its hands.

I confess some cases may happen, where the pretences on both sides may be so fair, as to put a judicious Christian to a stand what to chuse; but then their deliberation will be answerable, and then they will not change their opinions every month, as Sceptics do. Wherever error finds such a mutable dispositon, its work is half done before it makes one assault. How many wavering professors, at this day, lie in temptation's way? and how great a harvest have Errorists and Heretics had among them? There's not a *mountebank* comes upon the stage, but he shall find ten times more customers for his *drugs*, than the most learned and experienced *physician*. The giddy-headed multitude have more regard to novelty than truth.

The remedies.

How necessary and desirable are some effectual *rules* and *remedies* in this case! O what a mercy would it be to the professors of these days, to have their minds fixed, and their judgment settled in the truths of Christ? Happy is that man whose judgment is so guarded, that no dangerous error, or heresy, can commit a *rape* upon it. To this end I shall here commend the four following *rules*, to prevent this vertiginous malady in the heads of Christians.

Rule 1. Look warily to it, that you get a real inward implantation into Christ, and lay the foundation deep, and firm, in a due and serious deliberation of religion, whenever you engage in the public profession of it.

To this sense are the apostle's words, Col. ii. 6, 7. "As you "have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in "him, rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, "as you have been taught." *Fertility*, and *stability* in Christ, a pair of inestimable blessings, depend upon a good rooting of the soul in him at first. He that thrusts a dead stick into the ground, may easily pull it up again, but so he cannot do by a well rooted tree. A colour raised by violent action, or a great fire, soon dies away; but that which is natural, or constitutional, will hold: every thing is as its foundation is; it was want of a good root, and due depth of earth, which soon turned the green corn into dry stubble, Mat. xiii. 21.

Rule 2. Labour after an inward, experimental taste of all those truths which you profess.

This will preserve your minds from wavering and hesitation about the certainty and reality of them. We will not easily part with those truths, which have sensibly shed down

thoſe ſweet influences upon our hearts, Heb. x. 34. No ſophiſter can eaſily perſuade a man that hath taſted the ſweetneſs of honey, that it is a bitter and unpleaſant thing; *Non eſt diſputandum de guſtu:* You cannot eaſily perſuade a man out of his ſenſes.

Rule 3. Study hard, and pray earneſtly for ſatisfaction in the preſent truths, 2 Pet. i. 12. "That you may be eſtabliſhed "ἐν τῇ παρούσῃ ἀληθείᾳ, in the truth that now is under oppoſiti-"on, and controverſy." Be not ignorant of the truths that lie in preſent hazard.

Antiquated opinions, that are more abſtracted from our preſent intereſt, are no trials of the ſoundneſs of our judgments, and integrity of our hearts, as the controverſies and conflicts of the preſent times are. Every truth hath its time to come upon the ſtage, and enter the liſts; ſome in one age, and ſome in another; but Providence ſeems to have caſt the lot of your nativity for the honour and defence of thoſe truths with which error is ſtruggling, and conflicting in your times.

Rule 4. Laſtly, Be thoroughly ſenſible of the benefit and good of eſtabliſhment, and of the evil and danger of a wavering mind, and judgment.

"Be not carried about with divers and ſtrange doctrines, "(ſaith the apoſtle,) for it is a good thing that the heart be "eſtabliſhed," &c. Heb. xiii. 9. Eſtabliſhed ſouls are the honour of truth. It was the honour of religion, in the primitive days, that when the Heathens would proverbially expreſs an impoſſibility, they uſed to ſay, You may as ſoon turn a Chriſtian from Chriſt, as do it.

The fickleneſs of profeſſors is a ſtumbling-block to the world. They'll ſay, as Cato of the civil wars betwixt Caeſar and Pompey, *Quem fugiam video, quem ſequar non video:* they know whom to avoid, but not whom to follow. And as the honour of truth, ſo the flouriſhing of your own ſouls depend upon it. A tree, often removed from one ſoil to another, can never be expected to be fruitful; it is well if it makes a ſhift to live.

Cauſe 5. Another inward cauſe, diſpoſing men to receive erroneous impreſſions, is an unreaſonable eagerneſs to ſnatch at any doctrine or opinion, that promiſeth eaſe to an anxious conſcience.

Men that are under the frights and terrors of conſcience, are willing to liſten to any thing that offers preſent relief. Of all the troubles in the world, thoſe of the mind and conſcience are moſt intolerable: and thoſe that are in pain, are glad of eaſe and readily catch, at any thing that ſeems to offer it.

This ſeems to be the thing which led thoſe poor diſtreſſed wretches, intimated Micah vi. 6. into their groſs miſtakes and errors, about the method of the remiſſion of their ſins. "Wherewith ſhall I come before the Lord, and bow myſelf "before the high God? Shall I come before him with burnt-"offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleaſ-"ed with thouſands of rams, or with ten thouſand of rivers of "oil? Shall I give my firſt-born for my tranſgreſſion, the fruit "of my body for the ſin of my ſoul?" They were ready to purchaſe inward peace, and buy out their pardon at any rate. Nothing but the twinges of conſcience could have extorted theſe things from them. Great is the efficacy and torment of a guilty conſcience.

Satan, who feels more of this in himſelf than any other creature in the world, and knows how ready poor ignorant, but diſtreſſed ſinners, are to catch at any thing that looks like eaſe, or comfort, and being jealous what theſe troubles of conſcience may iſſue into, prepares for them ſuch erroneous doctrines, and opinions, under the names of *anodines*, and quieting *recipe's*, by ſwallowing of which they feel ſome preſent eaſe; but their diſeaſe is thereby made ſo much the more incurable.

* It is upon this account he hath found ſuch vent in the world for his *penances*, *pilgrimages*, and *indulgences* among the Papiſts. But ſeeing this ware will not go off among the reformed, and more enlightened profeſſors of Chriſtianity, he changeth his hand, and fitteth other doſes under other names, to quiet ſick and diſtreſſed ſouls, before ever their frights of conſcience come to ſettle into true repentance and faith, in the blood of Chriſt, by dreſſing up, and preſenting to them ſuch opinions as theſe, *viz.*

That they may boldly apply to themſelves all the promiſes of pardon and peace, without any reſpect at all to repentance or faith in themſelves; that it is not at all needful, nay, that it is illegal and ſinful to have any reſpect to theſe things, foraſmuch as their ſins were pardoned, and they juſtified from eternity; and that the covenant of grace is in all reſpects abſolute, and is made to ſinners, as ſinners, without any regard to their faith or

* Mr. Gataker, in his book againſt Saltmarſh, p. 27. tells us of one that had taken ill courſes, and being under much trouble of mind, could not be quiet till he turned Papiſt, and had been ſhrieved and abſolved by a prieſt.

repentance; and whatever ſins there be in them, God ſees them not §.

To ſuch a charm of troubles as this, how earneſtly doth the ear of a diſtreſſed conſcience liſten? how greedily doth it ſuck in ſuch pleaſing words? Are all ſins that are pardoned, pardoned before they are committed? and, Does the covenant of grace require neither repentance nor faith antecedently to the application of the promiſes? How groundleſs then are all my fears and troubles? This, like a doſe of opium, quiets, or rather ſtupifies the raging conſcience; for, even an error in judgment, till it be detected and diſcovered to be ſo, quiets and comforts the heart, as well as principles of truth; but, whenever the fallacy ſhall be detected, whether here or hereafter, the anguiſh of conſcience muſt be increaſed, or (which is worſe) left deſperate.

The remedies.

To prevent and cure this miſtake and error in the ſoul, by which it is fitted and prepared to catch any erroneous principle (which is but plauſible) for its preſent relief and eaſe, I ſhall deſire my reader ſeriouſly to ponder and conſider the following *queries* upon this caſe.

Query 1. Whether, by the vote of the whole rational world, a good trouble be not better than a falſe peace? Preſent eaſe is deſirable, but eternal ſafety is much more ſo: and, if theſe two cannot conſiſt under the preſent circumſtances of the ſoul, Whether it be not better to endure for a time thoſe painful pangs, than feel more acute and eternal ones, by quieting conſcience with falſe remedies before the time?

It is bad to ly toſſing a few days under a laborious fever; but far worſe to have that fever turned into a lethargy, or fatal apoplexy. Erroneous principles may rid the ſoul of its preſent pain, and eternal hopes and ſafety together. Acute pains are better than a ſenſeleſs ſtupidity. Though the preſent rage of conſcience be not a right and kindly conviction, yet it may lead to it, and terminate in faith and union with Chriſt at laſt; if Satan do not this way practiſe upon it, and quench it before its time.

Query 2. Bethink yourſelves ſeriouſly, whether troubles ſo quieted and laid aſleep, will not revive and turn again upon thee with a double force, as ſoon as the virtue of the drug (I mean the erroneous principle) hath ſpent itſelf?

§ Saltmarſh, in the title-page of his book called Free-grace, ſhews you the ſovereign virtue of Antinomian principles, to quiet troubles of conſcience of twelve years growth.

The efficacy of truth is eternal, and will maintain the peace it gives for ever; but all deluſions muſt vaniſh, and the troubles which they dammed up for a time, break out with a greater force. Satan employs two ſorts of witches, ſome to torment the bodies of men with grievous pain and anguiſh: but then he hath his white witches at hand, to relieve and eaſe them. And, have theſe poor wretches any great cauſe, think you, to boaſt of the cure, who are eaſed of their pains at the price of their ſouls?

Much like unto this, are the cures of inward troubles by erroneous principles. I lament the caſe of blinded Papiſts, who by pilgrimages, and offerings to the ſhrines of titular ſaints, attempt the cure of a leſſer ſin by committing a greater: is it becauſe there is not a God in Iſrael, who is able in due ſeaſon to pacify conſcience with proper and durable goſpel-remedies, that we ſuffer our troubles thus to precipitate us into the ſnares of Satan, for the ſake of preſent eaſe?

Query 3. Read the Scriptures, and enquire, Whether God's people, who have lain long under ſharp inward terrors, have not, at laſt, found ſettlement and inward peace by thoſe very methods which the principles that quiet you do utterly exclude?

If you will fetch your peace from a groundleſs notion, that your ſins were pardoned, and your perſons juſtified from all eternity, and therefore you may apply boldly and confidently to yourſelves the choiceſt promiſes and privileges in the goſpel, without any regard to faith or repentance wrought by the Spirit in your ſouls. I am ſure holy David took another courſe for the ſettlement of his conſcience, Pſal. li. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. And it hath been the conſtant practice of the ſaints, in all ages, to clear their title to the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, wrought without them, by the works of his Spirit wrought within them.

Cauſe 6. The next evil temper in the ſubject, preparing and diſpoſing it for error, is an eaſy CREDULITY, or ſequacious humour in men, rendering them apt to receive things upon truſt from others, without due and thorough examination of the grounds and reaſons of them themſelves.

This is a diſpoſition fitted to receive any impreſſion ſeducers pleaſe to make upon them; they are ſaid to deceive the hearts of the ſimple, ἀκακων, *i. e.* credulous, but well meaning people that ſuſpect no harm. It is ſaid, Prov. xiv. 15. "The "ſimple believeth every word." Through this ſluice, or floodgate, what a multitude of errors in Popery have overflowed

the people! They are told, they are not able to judge for themſelves, but muſt take the matters of their ſalvation upon truſt from their ſpiritual guides; and ſo the ſilly people are eaſily ſeduced, and made eaſily receptive of the groſſeſt abſurdities their ignorant leaders pleaſe to impoſe upon them.

And it were to be wiſhed, that thoſe two points, *viz. Miniſtrorum muta officia, et populi cæca obſequia*, the dumb ſervices of their miniſters, and the blind obedience of the people had ſtaid within the Popiſh confines. But, alas, alas! how many ſimple Proteſtants be there, who may be ſaid to carry their brains in other mens heads; and, like ſilly ſheep, follow the next in the track before them; eſpecially if their leaders have but wit and art enough to hide their errors under ſpecious and plauſible pretences. How many poiſonous drugs hath Satan put off under the gilded titles of *antiquity, zeal for God, higher attainments in godlineſs, new lights*, &c.? How natural is it for men to follow in the track, and be tenacious of the principles and practices of their progenitors? Multitudes ſeem to hold their opinions *jure hæreditario*, by an hereditary right, as if their faith deſcended to them the ſame way their eſtates do.

The emperor of Morocco told king John's ambaſſador, that he had lately read St. Paul's epiſtles; 'and truly, (ſaid he) were 'I now to chuſe my religion, I would embrace Chriſtianity 'before any religion in the world; but every man ought to 'die in that religion he received from his anceſtors.'

Many honeſt, well-meaning, but weak Chriſtians, are alſo eaſily beguiled by ſpecious pretences of new light, and higher attainments in reformation. This makes the weaker ſort of Chriſtians pliable to many dangerous errors, cunningly inſinuated under ſuch taking titles. What are moſt of the erroneous opinions now vogued in the world, but old errors, under new names and titles?

The remedies.

The remedies and preventions in this caſe, are ſuch as follow:

Remedy 1. It is beneath a man to profeſs any opinion to be his own, whilſt the grounds and reaſons of it are in other mens keeping, and wholly unknown to himſelf.

If a man may tell gold after his father, then ſure he may, and ought to try and examine doctrines and points of faith after him. We are commanded to be ready to give an account of the hope that is in us, and not to ſay, This or that is my judgment or opinion, but let others give an account of the ground and reaſon of it.

I confess, if he that leads me into an error were alone exposed to the hazard, and I quit and free, whatever become of him, it were quite another thing: but when our Saviour tells us Matth. xv. 14. that *both* (that is, the follower as well as the leader) *fall into the ditch*; at my peril be it, if I follow without eyes of my own: that's but a weak building that is shored up by a prop from a neighbour's wall. How many men have ruined their estates by suretiship for others? but of all suretiship, none so dangerous as spiritual suretiship. 'We neither ought '(as a late Worthy speaks) to *defy* the judgment of the weak-'est, nor yet, on the other side, to *deify* the judgment of the 'strongest Christian:' He that pins his faith upon another man's sleeve, knows not whither he will carry it.

Remedy 2. As you ought not to abuse your Christian privilege and liberty, to try all things, 1 Thess. v. 21. so neither on the other side to undervalue or part with it. See the things that so much concern your eternal peace with your own eyes.

I shewed you before, this liberty is abused by extending it too far; and under the notion of proving all things, many embolden themselves to innovate and entertain any thing: yet, beware of bartering such a precious privilege for the fairest promises others can make in lieu of it. I would not slight, nor undervalue the piety and learning of others, nor yet put out my own eyes to see by theirs.

Remedy 3. Before you adventure to espouse the opinions of others, diligently observe and mark the fruits and consequences of those opinions in the lives of the zealous abettors and propagators of them: *By their fruits* (saith Christ) *ye shall know them.*

When the opinion or doctrine naturally tends to looseness, or when it sucks and draws away all a man's zeal, to maintain and diffuse it, and practical religion thereby visibly languishes in their conversations; it is time for you to make a pause, before you advance one step farther towards it.

Cause 7. The next evil disposition that I shall note in the subject, is a vain *CURIOSITY* of mind, or an itching desire to pry into things unrevealed; at least, above our ability to search out and discover.

It is an observation, as true as antient, *Pruritus aurium scabies ecclesiae*, itching ears come to a scab upon the face of the church. The itch of novelty produceth the scab of error. Of this disease the apostle warns us, 2 Tim. iv. 3. "For the time "will come, when they will not endure sound Doctrine; but "after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers,

"having itching ears." Nothing will please them but new notions, and new modes of language, and method, tone, and gesture.

Sound doctrine is the only substantial and solid food that nourishes and strengthens the heart of the new creature; but vain Sceptics nauseate and despise this as trite, vulgar, cheap, and low. Nothing humours them but novelties and rarities; their unsettled brains must be wheeled about, διδαχαις ποικιλαις καιξναις, with *diverse and strange doctrines*, Heb. xiii. 9. Novelty and variety are the only properties that commend doctrines to wanton palates: Hence it is they so boldly intrude into things they have not seen, Col. ii. 18. These Cyril fitly calls τὰν τολμηρον κυριοτητα, the domineerings, or darings of bold spirits.

The schoolmen have filled the world with a thousand ungrounded fancies, as the distinct offices and orders of angels; and higher flights of fancy than these, which seem to be invented for no other end or use, but to please the itching ears of the curious.

There is not only a *vesana temeritas Genethliacorum*, a wild and daring rashness of *astrologers*, presuming to foretel futurities, and the fates of kingdoms, as well as particular persons, from the conjunctions and influences of the stars; but there is also found as high a presumption and boldness among men in matters of religion.

Satan is well aware of this humour in men, and how exceeding serviceable it is to his design; and therefore, having the very knack of clawing and pleasing itching ears, with taking novelties, he is never wanting to feed their minds with a pleasing variety, and fresh succession of them; new opinions are still invented, and minted, in which the dangerous hooks of error are hid: if men were once cured of this spiritual itch, and their minds reduced to that temper and sobriety, as to be pleased with, and bless God for the plain revealed truths of the gospel, Satan would drive but a poor trade, and find but few customers for his erroneous novelties.

The Remedies.

The proper remedies to cure this itch after novelty, or dangerous curiosity of the mind, are,

Remedy 1. Due reflection upon the manifold mischiefs that have entered into the world this way.

It was this curiosity, and desire to know, that overthrew our first parents, Gen. iii. 6. "When the woman saw that the tree "was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eye, and a "tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit

" thereof." The very ſame way by which he let in the firſt error, he hath let thouſands into the world ſince that day. Nothing is more common in the world, than for an old error to obtain afreſh under the name of new light. Satan hath the very art of turning ſtale errors after the mode of the preſent times, and make them current and paſſable as new diſcoveries, and rare novelties.

Thus he puts off Libertiniſm, the old ſin of the world, under the title of *Chriſtian Liberty*. What a troop of Pagan idolatrous rites were by this means introduced among the Papiſts? A great part of popery is but *Ethniciſmus redivivus*, Heatheniſm revived. The Pagans *Pontifex maximus*, was revived under the new title of Pope. The *Gentiles Luſtrations* in the Popiſh *holy water*. Their *novendiale ſacrum*, or *ſacrifice* nine days after the burial of the party, in the Popiſh Maſſes for the dead. Their *Alvarium Fratrum*, in cloiſters of Monks and Friars; their Enchanters, in Popiſh Exorciſts? their Aſyla, in Popiſh Sanctuaries; with multitudes more of Pagan rites, quite out of date in Chriſtendom, introduced again under new names in Popery; as was intimated, Rev. xi. 2. and Rev. xiii. 15.

Remedy 2. Be ſatisfied that God hath not left his people to ſeek their ſalvation, or ſpiritual ſubſiſtance among curious, abſtruſe, and doubtful notions; but in the great, ſolid, and plainly revealed truths of the goſpel *, John xvii. 3. " This is life eter-" nal, that they may know thee the only true God, and Jeſus " Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent." *In facili et abſoluto ſtat æternitas*: the great concerns of our ſalvation, are plain and eaſy to be underſtood.

Remedy 3. Vain curioſity is a dangerous ſnare of Satan: By ſuch trifles as theſe, he devours our time, eats up our ſtrength, and diverts our minds from the neceſſary and moſt important buſineſs of religion. Whilſt we immerſe our thoughts in theſe pleaſing, but barren contemplations, heart-work, cloſet-work, family-work, lie by neglected. Whilſt we are employed in garniſhing the diſh with flowers, and curious figures, the cunning cheat takes away the meat our ſouls ſhould ſubſiſt by.

Cauſe. 8. Pride and arrogancy of human reaſon is another evil diſpoſition, moulding and preparing the mind for errors.

* What we may be ignorant of without a fault, we ſhould not pry into with danger.

When men are once conceited of the ſtrength and perſpicuity of their own carnal reaſons and apprehenſions, nothing is more uſual than for ſuch men to run mad, with reaſon, into a thouſand miſtakes and errors. To this cauſe Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtorians aſcribe the errors that infeſt the church *.

Reaſon, indeed, is the higheſt natural excellency of man; it exalts him above all earthly creatures, and, in its primitive perfection, almoſt equalized him with angels, Heb. ii. 7. The pleaſures which reſult from its exerciſes and experiments, tranſcend all the delights and pleaſures of ſenſe. How common is it for men to dote upon their own intellectual beauty, and glory in their victories over weaker underſtandings? And though the reaſon of fallen men is greatly wounded and weakened by ſin; yet it conceits itſelf to be as ſtrong and clear as ever; and with Sampſon when his locks were ſhorn, goes forth as before time; being neither ſenſible of its own weakneſs, or of the myſterious and unſearchable depths of ſcripture.

Reaſon is our arbiter, and guide, by the inſtitution and law of nature, in civil and natural affairs: 'Tis the beam, and ſtandard, at which we weigh them: It is an home born judge, and king in the ſoul: Faith comes in as a ſtranger to nature, and ſo it is dealt with, even as an intruder into reaſon's province, juſt as the Sodomites dealt with Lot: It refuſeth to be an underling to faith. Out of this arrogancy of carnal reaſon, as from Pandora's Box, ſwarms of errors are flown abroad into the world.

By this means Socinianiſm firſt ſtarted, and hath ſince propagated itſelf. They look upon it as a ridiculous, and unaccountable thing to reaſon, that the Son ſhould be co-equal, and co-eternal with the Father: That God ſhould forgive ſins freely, and yet forgive none but upon full ſatisfaction. That Chriſt ſhould make that ſatisfaction by his ſufferings, and yet be *pars laeſa*, the party offended, and ſo make ſatisfaction to himſelf; with many more of the like ſtamp.

Yea Atheiſm, as well as Socinianiſm, are births from this

* Philoſophy or the wiſdom of human reaſon, which always hath done very much hurt to religion, hath produced of itſelf not a few Hereſies; for at that time philoſopical ſtudies chiefly flouriſhed; and men by their own ſubtilities, or (as they thought) demonſtrations were ſo confirmed in their opinions, that they thought nothing true which differed from their preconceived opinions. *Magdeb in. Cent. 2. cap. 5. p. 56.*

womb. 'Tis proud and carnal reaſon, which quarrels at the creation of the world, and ſeems to triumph in its uncontroulable maxim, *Ex nihilo, nihil fit; Out of nothing, comes nothing.* It looks upon the doctrine of the reſurrection with a deriding ſmile, as a thing incredible. It thinks it hard, and harſh, that God ſhould command men to turn themſelves to him, and threaten them with damnation, in caſe of refuſal; and yet, at the ſame time, man ſhould not have in himſelf a ſufficient power, and a free will to do this, without the ſupernatural, and preventing grace of God. It thinks it a ridiculous thing for ſuch a great and ſolemn ordinance of God as baptiſm is, to paſs upon ſuch a ſubject as an infant of a week old, which is not capable to underſtand the ends and uſes of it. Hence it is ſome over-heated zealots have not ſtuck to ſay, That we have as good warrant, and reaſon to baptize *cats*, *dogs*, and *horſes*, as we have to baptize infants *. Oh the madneſs of carnal reaſon!

The remedies.

To take down the arrogance, and prevent the miſchief of carnal reaſonings, let us be convinced,

Remedy 1. That it is the will of God, that reaſon in all believers, ſhould reſign to faith, and all ratiocination ſubmit to revelation.

Reaſon is no better than an uſurper, when it preſumes to arbitrate matters belonging to faith and revelation. ‖ Reaſon's proper place is to ſit at the feet of faith, and inſtead of ſearching the ſecret grounds and reaſons, to adore and admire the great and unſearchable myſteries of the goſpel. None of God's works are unreaſonable, but many of them are above reaſon. It was as truly, as ingeniouſly ſaid by one; *Never doth reaſon ſhew itſelf more reaſonable, than when it ceaſeth to reaſon about things that are above reaſon.* "Where is the wiſe? Where is "the Scribe? Where is the diſputer of this world? Hath not "God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world? For after that in "the wiſdom of God, the world by wiſdom knew not God; "it pleaſed God, by the fooliſhneſs of preaching, to ſave them "that believe," 1 Cor. i. 20, 21. 'Tis not reaſon, but faith that muſt ſave us.

* Mr. Samuel Clerk's Golden Apples. p. 149.

‖ Man having ſinned by pride, the wiſdom of God humbles him at the very root of the tree of knowledge, and makes him deny his own underſtanding, and ſubmit to faith; or elſe for ever to loſe his deſired felicity. *Laud. againſt Fiſher. p.* 5.

The wiſdom of God in the goſpel, is wiſdom in a myſtery, even hidden wiſdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory, 1 Cor. ii. 7. Such wiſdom, as the moſt eagle-eyed Rationaliſts, and famed Philoſophers of the world underſtood not. "Eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, neither have "entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath "prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed "them to us by his Spirit," *ibid.* ver. 9, 10.

Remedy 2. Be convinced of the weakneſs and deep corruption of natural reaſon; and this will reſtrain its arrogance, and make it modeſt and wary.

A convinced and renewed ſoul, is conſcious to itſelf of its own weakneſs and blindneſs; and therefore dares not pry audaciouſly into the *arcana cæli*, nor ſummon the great God to its bar: It finds itſelf poſed by the myſteries of nature, and therefore concludes itſelf an incompetent judge of the myſteries of faith.

The arrogancy of reaſon, is the reigning ſin of the unregenerate; though it be a diſeaſe with which the regenerate themſelves are infected. When conviction ſhall do its work upon the ſoul, the plumes of ſpiritual pride quickly fall; and it ſaith with Job, "Once have I ſpoken, but I will ſpeak no more; yea, "twice, but I will proceed no further," *q. d.* I have done, father, I have done; "I have uttered things that I underſtand "not," Job xlii. 3. Spiritual illumination cures this ambition.

Remedy 3. Conſider the manifold miſchiefs and evils flowing from the pride of reaſon.

It doth not only fill the world with errors and diſtractions, but it alſo invades the rights of heaven, and caſts a vile reflection upon the wiſdom, ſovereignty, and veracity of God. It lifts up itſelf againſt his wiſdom, not conſidering that "the "fooliſhneſs of God is wiſer than men," 1 Cor. i. 25. It ſpurns at his glorious ſovereignty, not conſidering that "he "giveth no account of his matters," Job xxxiii. 13. It queſtions his veracity, in ſaying with Nicodemus, "How can theſe "things be?" John iii. 9.

Cauſe 9. The laſt evil diſpoſition I ſhall here take notice of in the ſubject, is raſh and ignorant *zeal*; a temper preparing the mind both to propagate furiouſly, and receive eaſily, erroneous doctrines and opinions.

When there is in the ſoul more heat than light, when a fervent ſpirit is governed by a weak head; ſuch a temper of ſpirit Satan deſires and ſingles out as fitteſt for his purpoſe, eſpecially when the heart is graceleſs, as well as the underſtanding

weak. A blind horſe, of an high mettle, will carry the rider into any pit, and venture over the moſt dangerous precipices.

Such were the ſuperſtitious Jewiſh Zealots; they had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. This ζηλος κατ' ἐπιγνωσιν, *blind zeal*, St Paul charges juſtly upon the *Jewiſh Bigots*, Rom. x. 2. as the proper cauſe of their dangerous errors about the great point of juſtification; and ſurely no man underſtood the evil of it more than he, who in his unregenerate ſtate, was tranſported by it to the moſt furious perſecution of the ſaints, Acts xxvi. 11. and even to dotage, and extream fondneſs upon the erroneous traditions of his fathers, Gal. i. 14.

Blind zeal is a ſword in a mad-man's hand. No perſecutor to a conſcientious one, whoſe erroneous conſcience offers up the blood of the ſaints to the glory of God, John xvi. 2. The blind, but zealous Phariſees would compaſs ſea and land to make one proſelyte, Matth. xxiii. 15. as our modern Phariſees, the Jeſuiſts, have ſince done, who have mingled themſelves with the remoteſt and moſt barbarous nations, to draw them to the Romiſh errors. Of the ſame temper was the falſe teachers taxed by the apoſtle, Gal. iv. 17. they zealouſly affect you, but not well; yea, they would exclude you (*viz.* from our ſociety and ordinances) that you might affect them.

And as it is the great inſtrument by which Satan propagates errors, ſo it makes a fit temper in the ſouls of the people to receive them: For, by this means error gains the poſſeſſion of the affections, without paſſing a previous and due teſt by the underſtanding, and ſo gains the ſoul by the advantage of a ſurprize. Every thing, by how much the more weak and ignoble it is, by ſo much the more it watcheth upon ſurpriſals and advantages. Error cares not to endure the due examination and teſt of reaſon; and therefore ſeeks to gain by ſurpriſal, what it deſpairs of ever gaining by a plain and fair trial.

There be few Erroriſts in the world of Alexander's mind, who would *rather loſe the day, than ſteal the victory*. Hence it comes to paſs, that the greateſt number of thoſe they lead captives, are ſilly women, as the apoſtle ſpeaks, who are the moſt affectionate, but leaſt judicious, ſex.

From this blind zeal it is, that they cunningly wind their erroneous opinions into all their diſcourſes, where they have any hope to prevail. A rational and modeſt contradiction puts them into a flame, it breaks the neareſt bonds of friendſhip and ſociety.

Rabſhekah in 2 Kings xviii. would not treat with Hezekiah's

counſellors of ſtate, but with the common people upon the wall: And error cares not to treat with ſound reaſon, able to ſift it through the ſcripture-ſearch, but with the affections; as well knowing, it is in vain to make war in reaſon's territories without firſt gaining a party among the affections.

The remedies.

The beſt *defenſatives* againſt erroneous contagions, in this caſe, are to be found in the following particulars.

Firſt Defenſative. Reflect ſeriouſly and ſadly upon the manifold miſchiefs occaſioned every where, and in all ages of the world, by raſh zeal.

Revolve church-hiſtories and you ſhall find, that ſcarce any cruel perſecution hath flamed in the world, which hath not been kindled by blind zeal. Turn over all the records, both of Pagan and Popiſh perſecutions, and you ſhall ſtill find theſe two obſervations confirmed and verified.

Firſt, That ignorant zeal hath kindled the fires of perſecution; and, *Secondly*, That the more zealous any have been for the ways of error and falſhood, ſtill the more implacably fierce and cruel they have been to the ſincere ſervants of God. None like a ſuperſtitious *devoto* to manage the devil's work of perſecution thoroughly, and to purpoſe. They'll ruſh violently and head-long into the blood of their deareſt relations, or moſt eminent ſaints, to whoſe ſides the devil ſets this ſharp ſpur. Superſtitious zeal draws all the ſtrength and power of the ſoul into that one deſign; and woe to him that ſtands in the way of ſuch a man, if God interpoſe not betwixt him and the ſtroke. It was a rational wiſh of him that ſaid, *Liberet me Deus ab homine unius tantum negotii*, God deliver me from a man of one only deſign.

Now conſider, reader, if thy judgment be weak, and thy affections warm, how much thou lieſt expoſed, not only to errors which may ruin thyſelf, but alſo to tongue and hand-perſecution, wherein Satan may manage thy zeal for the injury or ruin of thoſe that are better than thyſelf: And withal, conſider, how many dreadful threatenings are found in ſcripture againſt the inſtruments of perſecution, ſo employed and managed by Satan.

Certainly, reader, it were better for thee to ſtand with thy naked breaſt before the mouth of a diſcharging cannon, than that thy ſoul ſhould ſtand under this guilt, before ſuch a ſcripture-threatening as that, Pſal. vii. 13. "He hath alſo prepared "for him the inſtruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows

" againſt the perſecutors." And none more likely to become ſuch, than thoſe of thine own temper and complexion; eſpecially if grace be wanting in the heart, whilſt zeal for erroneous principles eats up the affections.

Second Defenſative. Conſider what miſchief zeal for an error will do to thine own ſoul, as well as others.

It will wholly ingroſs thy time, thoughts, and ſtrength: ſo that if there be any gracious principle in thee, it ſhall not be able to thrive and proſper. For look as a fever takes off the natural appetite from food, ſo will erroneous zeal take off thy ſpiritual appetite from meditation, prayer, heart-examination, and all other the moſt neceſſary, and nouriſhing duties of religion, by reaſon whereof thy grace muſt languiſh.

When thy ſoul, with David's, ſhould be filled and feaſted, as with marrow and fatneſs, by delightful meditations of God upon thy bed, thou wilt be rolling in thy mind thy barren and inſipid notions, which yield no food, or ſpiritual ſtrength to thy ſoul; thou wilt lie muſing how to diſſolve the arguments, and objections againſt thine errors, when thou ſhouldeſt rather be employed in ſolving the juſt and weighty objections that lie againſt thy ſincerity, and intereſt in Chriſt, which were time far better improved.

Third Defenſative. Conſider how baneful this inordinate zeal hath been to Chriſtian ſociety, lamentably defacing, and almoſt diſſolving it every where, to the unſpeakable detriment of the churches.

We read, Mal. iii. 16. of a bleſſed time, when they that feared the Lord ſpake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name. Oh happy time! Halcyon days! I myſelf, remember the time, when the zeal of the ſaints ſpent itſelf in provoking one another to love, and good works, in joint and fervent prayer, in inward, experimental, and edifying communion; my ſoul hath them ſtill in remembrance, and is caſt down within me: for alas! alas! how do I ſee every where Chriſtian communion turned into vain janglings? Churches and families, into mere cockpits? Mens diſcourſings falling as naturally into contentions about trifles, as they were wont to do into heavenly and experimental ſubjects, to the unſpeakable diſgrace and damage of religion.

Fourth Defenſative. That opinion is juſtly to be ſuſpected for erroneous, which comes in at the poſtern-door of the affections; and not openly and fairly at the right gate of an enligh-

tened and well-satisfied judgment. It is a thief that cometh in at the back-door, at least strongly to be suspected for one. Truth courts the mistress, makes its first, and fairest addresses to the understanding. Error bribes the handmaid, and labours first to win the affections, that by their influence it may corrupt the judgment.

And thus you see, besides the innocent occasion, *viz. God's permission* of *errors* in the world, for the trial of his people, nine proper causes of errors found in the evil dispositions of the minds of men, which prepare them to receive erroneous doctrines, and impressions, *viz.*

1. A wrangling humour, at the pretended obscurity of Scripture.
2. The abuse of that Christian liberty, purchased by Christ.
3. Slothfulness, in searching the whole word of God.
4. Fickleness, and instability of judgment.
5. Eagerness after anodines, to ease a distressed conscience.
6. An easy credulity, in following the judgments, and examples of others.
7. Vain curiosity, and prying into unrevealed secrets.
8. The pride and arrogancy of human reason.
9. Blind zeal, which spurs on the soul, and runs it upon dangerous precipices.

We next come to consider the principal, impulsive cause, by which errors are propagated, and disseminated in the world.

Cause 10. Come we next, in the proper order, to consider the principal, impulsive cause of errors; which is SATAN, working upon the pre-disposed matter he finds in the corrupt nature of man. * The centurists, speaking of the strange, and sudden growth of errors, and heresies, immediately after the planting of the gospel by Christ, and the apostles, ascribe it to Satan.

Satan was a liar from the beginning, and abode not in the

* Which thing indeed, doth abundantly show that the malice of Satan is dreadful, who being conquered and overthrown by Christ, hath nevertheless attempted to sully, rent, and almost overturn his word, and the whole frame of religion, by horrible opinions and blasphemies. But we should have in view these monstrous inventions of this malignant spirit, and, as it were, these first springs of many heresies, which afterwards increased in a wonderful manner, like rivers receiving others into them, *&c. Hist. Magdeb. cent.* 1. *lib.* 2. *cap.* 5. *p.* 368.

truth: * He hates it with a deadly hatred, and all the children, and friends of truth. And this hatred he manifeſteth ſometimes by raiſing furious ſtorms of perſecution againſt the ſincere profeſſors of it, Rev. iii. 10. and ſometimes by clouds of hereſies, and errors, with deſign to darken it. In the former he acts as a roaring lion; in the latter as a ſubtle ſerpent, 2 Cor. xi. 5. "I fear, leſt as the ſerpent beguiled Eve through "his ſubtilty; ſo your minds ſhould be corrupted from the "ſimplicity that is in Chriſt."

He is exceeding ſkilful, and dexterous in citing, and wreſting the ſcriptures to ſerve his vile deſigns and purpoſes; and as impudently daring, as he is crafty, and cunning; as appears in the hiſtory of Chriſt's temptation in the deſart, Mat. iv. 6. where he cites one part of that promiſe, Pſal. xci. 11. and ſuppreſſeth the reſt; ſhews the encouragement, *viz. He ſhall give his angels charge over thee;* but clips off the limitation of it, *viz. to keep thee in all thy ways: In viis, non in praecipitiis,* In our lawful ways, not in raſh, and dangerous precipices; as Bernard well gloſſeth.

And 'tis worth obſervation, that he introduceth multitudes of errors into the world under the unſuſpected notions of admirable prophylactics, and approved preſervatives from all miſchiefs, and dangers from himſelf. Under this notion, he hath neatly, and covertly ſlided into the world, holy-water croſſings, reliques of ſaints, and almoſt innumerable other ſuperſtitious rites.

Erroneous teachers are the miniſters of Satan, however they transform themſelves into miniſters of righteouſneſs, 2 Cor. xi. 15. and the ſubtle, dangerous errors they broach, are fitly ſtiled by the Spirit of God, τα βαθη του Σαταν, *the depths of Satan,* Rev. ii. 24. The corrupt teachers, the Gnoſtics, *&c.* called them depths, *i. e.* great myſteries, high and marvellous attainments in knowledge; but the Spirit of God fits a very proper epithet to them. They are ſatanical depths, and myſteries of iniquity. Now the level and deſign of Satan herein, is double.

Firſt, He aims at the ruin, and damnation of thoſe that vent, and propagate them; upon which account the apoſtle calls them, αιρεσεις απωλειας, 2 Pet. ii. 1. deſtructive, or (as we render

* When Swinkfield ſent his books to Luther, he told the meſſenger, the devil was the author of them: and the Lord rebuke thee, Satan, was the anſwer he returned to them.

it) damnable hereſies. And becauſe God will preſerve the ſouls of his own from this mortal contagion, therefore,

Secondly, He endeavours, by leſſer errors, to buſy the minds, and check the growth of grace in the ſouls of the ſaints, by employing them about things ſo foreign to true godlineſs, and the power thereof, Heb. xiii. 9.

The remedies.

The *rules*, for prevention and recovery, are theſe that follow:

Rule 1. Pray earneſtly for a thorough change of the ſtate, and temper of thy ſoul, by ſound converſion, and regeneration.

Converſion turns us from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to God, Acts xxvi. 18. They are his own ſlaves and vaſſals, that are taken captive by him at his will, 2 Tim. ii. 16. A ſanctified heart is a ſovereign defenſative againſt erroneous doctrines; it furniſhes the ſoul with ſpiritual eyes, judicious ears, and a diſtinguiſhing taſte, by which it may diſcern both good and evil, truth and error, Heb. v. 14. yea, it puts the ſoul at once under the conduct of the ſpirit, and protection of the promiſe, John xvi. 13. and though this doth not ſecure a man from all leſſer miſtakes, yet it effectually ſecures him from greater ones, which are inconſiſtent with Chriſt, and ſalvation.

Rule 2. Acquaint yourſelves with the wiles, and methods of Satan, and be not ignorant of his devices, 2 Cor. ii. 11.

When once you underſtand the waſh, and paint with which he ſets off the ugly face of error, you will not eaſily be enamoured with it. Pretences of devotion upon one ſide, and of purity, zeal, and reformation upon the other; though they be pleaſant ſounds to both ears, yet the wary ſoul will examine, before it receive, and admit doctrinal points under theſe gilded titles. Thoſe that have made their obſervations upon the ſtratagems of Satan, will heedfully obſerve both the tendency of doctrines, and the lives of their teachers; and if they find looſeneſs, pride, wantonneſs in them, it is not a glorious title, or magnificent name that ſhall charm them. They know Satan can transform himſelf into an angel of light; and no wonder if his miniſters alſo be transformed into miniſters of righteouſneſs, 2 Cor. xi. 14, 15.

Rule 3. Reſign your minds, and judgments in fervent prayer to the government of Chriſt, and conduct of the Spirit; and in all your addreſſes to God, pray that he would keep them chaſte, and pure, and not ſuffer Satan to commit a rape upon

them: Plead with God that part of Chriſt's prayer, John xvii. 17. "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth."

Rule 4. Live in the conſcientious, and conſtant practice of all thoſe truths and duties God hath already manifeſted to you.

This will bring you under that bleſſed promiſe of Chriſt, John vii. 17. "If any man will do his will, he ſhall know of "the doctrine, whether it be of God" Satan's greateſt ſucceſſes are among idle, notional, and vain profeſſors; not humble, ſerious, and practical Chriſtians.

Cauſe II. Having conſidered, and diſpatched the ſeveral internal cauſes of error, found in the evil diſpoſitions of the ſeduced, as alſo the impulſive cauſe, *viz.* Satan, who fits ſuitable baits to all theſe ſinful humours, and evil tempers of the heart; we come next to conſider the inſtrumental cauſe, employed by Satan in this work, *viz.* the falſe teacher, whom Satan makes uſe of as his ſeeds-man, to diſſeminate and ſcatter erroneous doctrines and principles into the minds of men, ploughed up, and prepared by thoſe evil tempers fore-mentioned, as a fit ſoil to receive them.

The choice of inſtruments is a principal part of Satan's policy. Every one is not fit to be employed in ſuch a ſervice as this. All are not fit to be of the council of war, who yet take their places of ſervice in the field. A *ruſtic* carried out of the field, on board a ſhip at ſea, though he never learned his compaſs, nor ſaw a ſhip before, can, by another's direction, tug luſtily at a rope; but he had need be an expert artiſt, that ſits at the helm, and ſteers the courſe. The worſt cauſes need the ſmoothſt orators; and bad ware, a cunning merchant to put it off *.

Deep-pated men are coveted by Satan, to manage this deſign: None like an eloquent Tertullus to confront a Paul, Acts xxiv. 1. A ſubtle Eccius to enter the liſt, in defence of the Popiſh cauſe, againſt the learned, and zealous reformers. When the duke of Buckingham undertook to plead the bad cauſe of Richard the third, the Londoners ſaid, *They never thought it had been poſſible for any man to deliver ſo much bad matter, in ſuch good words, and quaint phraſes* †.

* That the impoſtures of Montanus were ſubtle and cunning, and ſuch as might eaſily impoſe on ſome by a fair ſhow, is plain from this, that he admitted almoſt the whole ſcripture, and as Epiphanius writes, taught the ſame things concerning God the Father, Son and Holy Ghoſt, which the church of Chriſt did teach. *Magdeb. Cent.* 2. *cap.* 5. *p.* 77.

† Continuation of Daniel's Hiſtory. p. 233.

The first instrument, chosen by Satan to deceive man, was the serpent; because that creature was more subtle than any beast of the field. There is not a man of eminent parts, but Satan courts and solicits him for this service. St. Austin told an ingenious, but unsanctified scholar, *Capit abs te ornari diabolus*, The devil covets thy parts to adorn his cause. He surveys the world, and wherever he finds more than ordinary strength of reason, pregnancy of wit, depth of learning, and elegancy of language, that is the man he looks for.

These are the men that can almost indiscernibly sprinkle their errors among many precious truths, and wrap up their poisonous drugs in leaf-gold, or sugar. * Maresius notes of Crellius, and his accomplices, That by the power of their eloquence, and sophistry of their arguments, they were able, artificially, to cloath horrible blasphemies, to allure the simple.

And, like the Hyaena, they can counterfeit the voice of the shepherds, to deceive and destroy the sheep. There is (saith a late † worthy) an *erudita nequitia*, a learned kind of wickedness, a subtle art of deceiving the minds of others. Upon which account the spirit of God sometimes compares them, 2 Pet. ii. 3. to cunning and cheating *tradesmen*, who have the very art to set a gloss upon their bad wares with fine words, πλαστοις λογοις υμας εμπορευσονται, they buy and sell the people with their enforcing and feigned words ‡. And sometimes he compares them to cunning *gamesters*, that have the art, and sleight of hand, to cog the die, to deceive the unskilful, and win their game, Eph. iv. 14. προς την μεθοδειαν, &c.

And sometimes the spirit of God compares them to *witches* themselves, Gal. iii. 1. τις υμας εβασκανεν, *Foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you?* How many strange fates have been done upon the bodies of men and women, by *witchcraft?* But far more, and stranger, upon the souls of men, by the *magic of error*. Jannes, and Jambres, performed wonderful things in the sight

* With the disguise of painted eloquence, with sophistical arguments taken from scripture, perniciously wrested and with false and deceitful argument, the most horrid blasphemies are artfully dressed up to insnare the simple. *Pref. to Hyd. Socin.*

† Mr. W. Gurnal, Christian armour, Part 2. *p.* 33.

‡ There are certain vain talkers and seducers of mens minds, not in reality Christians but men making a trade and merchandize of Christianity, who so mix the poison of error with some sweetning allurements, as with wine and honey, that he who drinks of that palatable potion, being taken with its sweetness, is unawares, betrayed to death. *Ignatius Epist. to Trallian. p.* 62.

of Pharaoh, by which they deceived and hardened him; and unto theſe falſe teachers are compared.

Such a man was Elymas the ſorcerer, who laboured to ſeduce the deputy, Sergius Paulus, tho' a prudent man, Acts xiii. 7, 8, 9, 10. *Oh full of all ſubtilty, and all miſchief, thou child of the devil!* ſaith Paul unto him. The art of ſeduction, from the ways of truth and holineſs, diſcovers a man to be both the *child*, and *ſcholar* of the devil.

But as the wiſe and painful miniſters of Chriſt, who turn many to righteouſneſs, ſhall have double glory in heaven; ſo theſe ſubtile, and moſt active agents for the devil, who turn many from the ways of righteouſneſs, will have a double portion of miſery in hell.

The remedies.

The proper *remedies* in this caſe are principally two.

Remedy 1. Pray fervently, and labour diligently in the uſe of all God's appointed means, to get more ſolidity of judgment, and ſtrength of grace, to eſtabliſh you in the truth, and ſecure your ſouls againſt the cunning craftineſs of men that lie in wait to deceive.

It is the ignorance, and weakneſs of the people, which makes the factors for errors ſo ſucceſsful as they are. Conſult the Scriptures, and you ſhall find theſe cunning merchants drive the quickeſt and gainfulleſt trade among the weak and injudicious. So ſpeaks the apoſtle, *With good words, and fair ſpeeches, they deceive the hearts of the ſimple;* ἀκάκων, harmleſs, weak, eaſy ſouls, who have a deſire to do well, but want wiſdom to diſcern the ſubtilties of them that mean ill; who are void both of fraud in themſelves, and ſuſpicion of others. Oh! what ſucceſs have the deceivers, χρηστολογίας καὶ εὐλογίας, their fair words and ſugared ſpeeches, ſweet and taking expreſſions, among ſuch innocent ones!

And who are they among whom Satan's cunning gameſters commonly win the game, and ſweep the ſtakes, but weak Chriſtians, credulous ſouls, whom for that reaſon the apoſtle calls νήπιοι, children? The word properly ſignifies an infant, when it is referred to the age; but unſkilful and unlearned, when referred (as it is here) to the mind. So again, 2 Pet. ii. 14. They (that is, the falſe teachers there ſpoken of) beguile ψυχὰς ἀστηρίκτους, unſtable ſouls, ſouls that are not confirmed and grounded in the principles of religion. Whence by the way, take notice of the unſpeakable advantage, and neceſſity of being

well catechiſed in your youth; the more judicious, the more ſecure.

Remedy 2. Labour to acquaint yourſelves with the ſleights and artifices Satan's factors and inſtruments generally make uſe of, to ſeduce and draw men from the truth. The knowledge of them is a good defenſative againſt them. Now there are two common artifices of ſeducers, which it is not ſafe for Chriſtians to be ignorant of.

Firſt, They uſually ſeek to diſgrace and blaſt the reputation of thoſe truths, and miniſters ſet for their defence, which they deſign afterwards to overthrow and ruin, and to beget credit, and reputation, to thoſe errors which they have a mind to introduce. How many precious truths of God are this day, and with this deſign, defamed as legal and carnal doctrines; and thoſe that defend them, as men of *an Old Teſtament* ſpirit?

Humiliation for ſin, contrition of ſpirit, *&c.* fall under diſgrace with many, and indeed all qualifications, and pre-requiſites unto coming to Chriſt, as things not only needleſs, but pernicious unto the ſouls of men, although they have not the leaſt dependance upon them: yea, faith itſelf, as a pre-requiſite unto juſtification, as no better than a condition pertaining to *Adam's covenant*.

And ſo for the perſons of orthodox miniſters; you ſee into what contempt the falſe teachers would have brought both the perſon and preaching of Paul himſelf, 2 Cor. x. 10. "His bo-" dily preſence (ſay they) is weak, and his ſpeech contemptible."

Secondly, Their other common artifice is, to inſinuate their falſe doctrines among many acknowledged and precious truths, which only ſerve for a convenient vehicle to them; and beſides that, to make their errors as palatable and guſtful as they can to the vitiated appetite of corrupt nature. The forementioned worthy * hath judiciouſly obſerved how artificially *Satan* hath blended his baneful doſes, to pleaſe the palate of *carnal reaſon*, *ſpiritual pride*, and the deſire of *fleſhly liberty*.

Carnal reaſon is that great idol, which the more intelligent part of the carnal world worſhips. And are not the Socinian hereſies as pleaſant to it, as a well mixt *julep* to a *feverish ſtomach*.

Spiritual pride is another *Diana*, which obtains greatly in the world; and no doctrine like the Pelagian, and Semipelagian errors, to gratify it. A doctrine that ſets fallen nature upon its legs again, and perſuades it, it can go alone to Chriſt; at leaſt, with a little external help of moral ſuaſion, without any

* Mr. W. G.

preventing, or creating work in the ſoul. This goes down glib, and gratefully.

And then for *fleſhly liberty*, How do thoſe that are fond of it rejoice in that doctrine, or opinion, which looſes nature from the yoke of reſtraint? How does the poor deluded *Papiſt* hug himſelf, to think he hath liberty, by his religion, to let looſe the reins of his luſt to all ſenſualities, and quit himſelf from all that guilt, by auricular confeſſion to the prieſt once a year? How doth the *Familiſt* ſmile upon that principle of his, which tells him, the goſpel allows more liberty than ſevere legal teachers think fit to tell them of: they preſs repentance, and faith; but Chriſt hath done all this to thy hands.

Cauſe 12. Having conſidered the ſeveral cauſes of errors, found in the evil diſpoſitions of the ſeduced, as alſo the impulſive, and inſtrumental cauſes, namely, Satan, and falſe teachers employed by him; I ſhall now proceed to diſcover ſome ſpecial, and moſt ſucceſsful methods, frequently uſed by them, to draw the minds of men from the truth. Amongſt which, that which comes firſt to conſideration, is the great ſkill they have in repreſenting the abuſes of the ordinances of God, and duties of religion, by wicked men to ſcare tender and weak conſciences from the due uſe of them, and all further attendance upon them.

The abuſe of Chriſt's holy appointments is ſo cunningly improved to ſerve this deſign, that the minds of many well-meaning perſons receive ſuch deep diſguſt at them, that they are ſcarce ever to be reconciled to them again. A ſtrong prejudice is apt to drive men from one extreme upon another, as thinking they can never get far enough off from that which hath been ſo ſcaringly repreſented to them. Thus, making good the old obſervation, *Dum vitant ſtulti vitia, in contraria currunt*; they run from the troubleſome ſmoak of ſuperſtition, into the fire of an irreligious contempt of God's ordinances, ſplit themſelves upon Charybdis to avoid Scylla. *Ex. gr.*

The Papiſts having deeply abuſed the ordinance of Baptiſm, by their corruptive mixtures, and additions of the ſurperſtitious *croſs, chriſm*, &c. Part whereof is not ſufficiently purged to this day by the reformation; and finding alſo multitudes of carnal Proteſtants dangerouſly reſting upon their ſuppoſed baptiſmal regeneration, to the great hazard of their ſalvation; which miſtake is but too much countenanced by ſome of its adminiſtrators: they take from hence ſuch deep offence at the adminiſtration of it to any infants at all, (tho' the ſeed of God's covenanted people) that they think they can never be ſharp enough

in their invectives against it; nor have they patience to hear the most rational defences of that practice.

So, for that scriptural heavenly duty of *singing*: what more commonly alledged against it, than the abuse and ill effects of that precious ordinance? How often is the nonsense, and error of the common translation, the rudeness and dulness of the metre of some Psalms, as Psal. vii. 13. as also the cold formality, with which that ordinance is performed by many who do but parrotize? I say, how often are these things buzzed into the ears of the people, to alienate their hearts from so sweet and beneficial a duty?

And very often we find it urged to the same end, how unwarrantable, and dangerous a thing it is for carnal and unregenerated persons, to appropriate to themselves in singing those praises and experiences which are peculiar to the saints; not understanding, or considering, that the singing of Psalms is an ordinance of Christ, appointed for teaching, and admonition, as well as praising, Col. iii. 16. "Teaching and admonishing "one another in Psalms and hymns," &c. * Thus Antinomianism took, if not its rise, yet its encouragement from the too rigorous pressing of the law upon convinced sinners.

If Satan can prevail first with wicked men, to corrupt and abuse God's ordinances by superstitious mixtures and additions; and then with good men, to renounce and slight them for the sake of those abuses; he fully obtains his design, and gives Christ a double wound at once; one by the hand of his avowed enemies, the other by the hands of his friends, no less grievous than the first. First, wicked men corrupt Christ's ordinances, and then good men nauseate them.

The remedies.

The proper remedies against errors, insinuated by the abuses of duties and ordinances, are such as follow:

Remedy 1. Let men consider, that there is nothing in religion so great, so sacred and excellent, but some or other have greatly corrupted, or vilely abused them.

What is there in the whole world more precious and excellent than the free grace of God? and yet you read, Jude 4. of some that turned the grace of our Lord into lasciviousness. What more desirable to Christians, than the glorious liberty Christ hath purchased for them by his blood, and settled upon

* The divinity of former ages, saith Mr. Saltmarsh, put but a grain or drachm of gospel to a pound of law, in their receipts for distempered souls. *Vide Saltmarsh* of free grace, *p.* 40.

them in the goſpel-charter? A liberty from Satan, ſin, and the rigour and curſe of the law; and yet you read, 1 Pet. ii. 16. of them that uſed this liberty for a cloak of maliciouſneſs. It is true, Chriſt came to be a ſacrifice for ſin, but not a cloak for ſin; to ſet us at liberty from the bondage of our luſts, not from the ties and duties of our obedience. Under the pretence of this liberty it was, that the Gnoſtics, Carpocratians, and the Menandrians of old, did not only connive at, but openly taught and practiſed all manner of lewdneſs and uncleanneſs.

† St. Auguſtine, in his book of hereſy, makes this ſad complaint, "The Menandrians (ſaith he) do willingly embrace all "uncleanneſs, as the fruit of the grace of God towards men." And not only the liberty purchaſed by Chriſt, but the very perſon and goſpel of Chriſt are liable to abuſes; and oftentimes, through the corruptions of mens hearts, become ſtones of ſtumbling, and rocks of offence. What then? ſhall we renounce the grace of God, our Chriſtian liberty, the very goſpel, yea, and perſon of Chriſt himſelf, becauſe each of them have been thus vilely abuſed by wicked wretches? At the peril of our eternal damnation be it, if we do ſo. *Bleſſed is he* (ſaith our Lord) *that is not offended in me.* Beware, leſt by this means Satan at once wound the Lord Jeſus Chriſt by ſcandal, and thy ſoul by prejudice.

Remedy 2. Conſider alſo, that it is the nature and temper of a gracious ſoul, to raiſe his eſteem, and heighten his love to thoſe ordinances, which are moſt abuſed and diſgraced by men.

The more they are abuſed and oppoſed by others, the higher they ſhould be valued and honoured by us: Pſal. cxix. 126, 127. "It is time for thee, Lord, to work; for they have made "void thy law; therefore I love thy commandments above "gold, yea, above fine gold;" *q. d.* The more they are diſgraced and abuſed by wicked men, the more do I honour and prize them. A like ſpirit with David's was found in Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 14. "I have been very jealous for the Lord God "of hoſts; becauſe the children of Iſrael have forſaken thy "covenant; thrown down thine altars, and ſlain thy prophets "with the ſword."

A good man will ſtrive to honour and ſecure thoſe truths and duties moſt, which he finds under moſt diſgrace or danger: he loves the truth ſincerely, who cleaves to it, and ſtands by it under all oppoſition. This is a good trial of the ſoundneſs of thy

† *Menandriani omnem turpitudinem libenter amplexi ſunt, tanquam gratiae Dei erga homines fructum.* Auguſt. lib. de Hæreſ.

heart, and purity of thine ends in religion; ſuch a proof, as the honour and reputation of religion in the world can never give thee.

In Solomon's time, the Jews were very cautious how they admitted and received proſelytes, ſuſpecting that by-ends, and worldly reſpects, may draw men to it; but they were not ſo cautious in times of diſgrace and perſecution.

Remedy 3. Before you part with any ordinance, or practice in religion, bethink yourſelves, whether you never found any ſpiritual bleſſings or advantages in that path which you are now tempted to forſake.

Had you never any ſpiritual meltings of your hearts and affections in that heavenly ordinance of *ſinging?*, And, may there not be now thouſands of mercies in your poſſeſſion, in conſequence to, and as the fruit of your ſolemn dedication to God in baptiſm, by your covenanted parents? For my own part, I do heartily and ſolemnly bleſs God for it upon this account; and ſo, I hope thouſands, beſides myſelf, have cauſe to do: however, ſuch a practice may, by no means, be deſerted by you, becauſe abuſed by others.

Cauſe 13. Another method and artifice, by which falſe teachers draw multitudes of diſciples after them, is, by granting to their ignorant and ambitious followers the *Liberty* of *Propheſying*: flattering them into a conceit of their excellent gifts and attainments, when God knows they had more need to be catechiſed, and taught the principles of Chriſtianity, than undertake to expound and apply thoſe profound myſteries unto others.

Satan hath filled the church and world with errors and troubles this way.

* When ignorant and unexperienced perſons begin to think it a low and dull thing to ſit from year to year under other mens teachings, and to fancy that they are wiſer than their teachers, their pride will quickly tempt them to ſhew their ignorance, and that miſchievous ignorance will prove dangerous to the truth, and troubleſome to the church. The apoſtle forbids the ordination of a novice, leſt he be puffed up, and fall into the condemnation of the devil; and in 1 Tim. i. 7. he ſhews us the

* Ignorant and wicked men, not minding, that the ſame inſpired writer never advances contrary aſſertions on one and the ſame ſubject; and regarding only the ſound of the words, do overlook the ſenſe and ſcope of them; and obſerving that there is a diverſity or ſeeming contrariety in the ſame ſcripture-expreſſions, they have apoſtatized into error, not underſtanding the true meaning of them.

aſſion why ſome ſwerved and turned aſide unto vain janglings: and it was this, that *they deſired to be teachers of the law, neither underſtanding what they ſaid, nor whereof they affirmed;* that is, they affected to be preachers, though not able to ſpeak congruouſly, with tolerable ſenſe and reaſon.

I do not here cenſure and condemn the uſe and exerciſe of the gifts of all private Chriſtians. There are to be found, amongſt them, ſome perſons of raiſed parts, and anſwerable modeſty and humility, who may be very uſeful, when called to ſervice, in extraordinary caſes, by the voice of providence; or exerciſe their gifts in a probationary way, or in due ſubordination unto Chriſt's public officers and ordinances, by, and with the conſent of the paſtor and congregation.

But when unqualified, and uncalled perſons, undertake ſuch a work, out of the conceit and pride of their own hearts, or are allured to it by the crafty deſigns of erroneous teachers, partly to overthrow a public, regular, and ſtanding miniſtry in the church, to which end the ſcriptures are manifeſtly abuſed, ſuch as, Jer. xxxi. 34. Rom. xii. 6. 1 Cor. xiv. 1 Pet. iv. 10. with many others: this is the practice I here cenſure, which, like a Trojan *horſe*, hath ſent forth multitudes of erroneous perſons into the city of God to infeſt and defile it.

I cannot doubt but many a ſincere Chriſtian may be drawn into ſuch employment, which puts him into a capacity of honduring God in a more eminent way, which is a thing deſirable to an honeſt and zealous heart: and that the temptation may be greatly ſtrengthened upon them by the plauſible ſuggeſtions of cunning ſeducers, who tell them, that thoſe miniſters who oppoſe and condemn this practice, do it as men concerned for their own intereſt, as deſirous to monopolize the work to themſelves, and as envying the Lord's people: and that Chriſt hath given them a greater liberty in this caſe, than thoſe men will allow them. By this means they draw many after them, and fix them in their erroneous ways.

I have no mind at all here to expoſe the follies and miſchiefs introduced this way, as neither being willing to grieve the hearts of the ſincere on one ſide, nor gratify ſcoffing Atheiſts, and profane enemies to religion upon the other ſide; only this I will, and muſt ſay, that by this means the ſacred ſcriptures are moſt injuriouſly wreſted, the peace and order of the church diſturbed, and a great many miſtakes and errors introduced.

The remedies.

The prevention and cure of errors this way introduced, or

likely to be introduced into the church, is by pondering and applying the following *conſiderations.*

Conſideration 1. Let all that encourage others, or undertake by others encouragement, ſuch a work as this, for which they are not competently qualified, and unto which they are not regularly called, conſider ſeriouſly with themſelves what danger they caſt their own and other mens ſouls upon.

The apoſtle tells us, 2 Pet. iii. 16. "That the unlearned "and unſtable do wreſt the ſcriptures to their own deſtruc-"tion." Danger enough, one would think, to ſcare them from it, did not the ſame ſin of ignorance, which makes them wreſt the ſcriptures, cauſe them alſo to ſlight and overlook the danger of ſo doing *.

Certainly, my friends, it is a great deal ſafer, and more excuſable, to put an ignorant ruſtic into an apothecary's ſhop, to compound a medicine of drugs and ſpirits, which he underſtands not, and confidently adminiſter the ſame to the bodies of men, than for ſuch perſons as are led by ignorance and confidence, to intermeddle with the miniſterial employment; the one perhaps, by miſtake, may poiſon mens bodies; but the other their ſouls. An ignorant maſter, or pilot, that never learned the compaſs, are rather to be truſted among rocks and quick-ſands, than a proud ignorant perſon with the conduct of ſouls.

Conſideration 2. What daring preſumption is it to intrude ourſelves into ſo great and weighty an employment, without any call or warrant of Chriſt! Rom. x. 14. "How ſhall they "call upon him of whom they have not heard? and, how ſhall "they hear without a preacher? and, how ſhall they preach "except they be ſent?"

Theſe myſteries muſt be committed to faithful men, who ſhall be able to teach others: thoſe abilities muſt be examined, 1 Tim. iii. x. and the exerciſe of them warranted by a due and orderly appointment thereunto, 1 Tim. iv. 14. elſe, (as one well obſerves) *In tam praepoſtera diſciplinae ruina tot eſſent ſenſus, quot capita; tot diſſenſus, quot ſenſus;* we ſhall have as many ſenſes of ſcripture, as we have preachers, *&c.*

If every Phaeton, that thinks himſelf able, ſhall undertake to drive the chariot of the ſun, no wonder if the world be ſet on fire. Gifts and abilities of mind are not, of themſelves, ſufficient to make a preacher. Some lawyers at the bar, may be

* Athanaſius declares, that the malicious wreſting of ſcripture brings forth errors. *Athanaſius againſt Apollinar.*

as skilful as the judge upon the bench, but without a commission they dare not sit there.

Consideration 3. The honour you affect, to vent your unsound notions with liberty, is, in scripture-account, your greatest dishonour.

The scripture reckons false teachers among the basest of the people: *The prophet that teacheth lies, he is the tail, i. e.* the basest part of the whole body of the people, Isa. ix. 15. And so far is due gospel-liberty from countenancing such dangerous irregularities, that we find in a clear prophecy of gospel-times, what shame God will pour upon them, Zech. xiii. 4, 5. "They "shall be brought with shame enough to confess, I am no pro-"phet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep "cattle from my youth."

Consideration 4. How much more safe, regular and advantageous were it for such as you, to fill your own proper places under able and faithful gospel-ministers, and to suck the breasts of fruitful ordinances, than to consume and pine away by sucking your own breasts? I mean, living upon your own weak and insufficient gifts, in the sinful neglect of Christ's appointments?

Cause 14. False teachers also propagate their errors by a spirit of *Enthusiasm*, the usual concomitant of erroneous doctrine; and draw away multitudes after them, by pretending to extraordinary revelations, visions, and voices from heaven, which seem to give great credit to their way and party †.

This was an old trick and practice of deceivers, Deut. xiii. 1. to give signs and wonders in confirmation of their way, which signs the Lord may permit to fall out to prove his people, ver. 2, 3. though, for the most part, they are confuted by their unanswerable events.

In the beginning of our *reformation* by Luther, Calvin, *&c.* there sprang up a generation of men, called Swinkfeldians, great pretenders to revelations and visions, who were always speaking of *deifications*; and an higher strain of language they

† But some being deceived by the predictions of the false prophets, of whom both God and the true prophets had forewarned them, fell from the word of God, and forsook the true tradition; for all these, being entangled with the snares of the devil, (which they ought to have foreseen and avoided) have profaned the divine Name and worship, thro' their foolishness. *Lact. book* 4. *chap.* 30. *on Heres.*

commonly uſed among themſelves, than other ſerious Chriſtians underſtood, and therefore ſcornfully entitled orthodox and humble Chriſtians, who ſtuck to the ſcripture-phraſe, and wholſome form of ſound words, Grammatiſts, Vocabuliſts, Literaliſts, *&c.* "Theſe men (as ‡ Scultetus in his annals, *ad* "*annum* 1525. obſerves of them) were ſo entangled in certain "enthuſiaſtic ſnares, that they thought it the higheſt impi- "ety to renounce them; and they had befooled multitudes "with their magnificent words of *Illumination, Revelation,* "*Deification.*"

Much of the ſame ſpirit was Thomas Muntzer, John of Leyden, David George, Jacob Behmen, *&c.* whoſe cloudy nonſenſe, enigmatical expreſſions, and wilful obſcurity, drew many into a ſtrange admiration of them; they all pretend to an higher knowledge of myſteries than what the goſpel is acquainted with; and yet give us (as Mr. Baxter well obſerves) neither reaſons with Ariſtotle, nor miracles with Chriſt and his apoſtles, to cauſe us to believe any of their new revelations. *Vide* Baxter *of the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt*, p. 148.

Of the ſame bran were our late Familiſts in England, of whom Henry Nichols was the chief leader, who decried the written word as a dead letter; and ſet up their own fond conceits and fancies under the notion of the Spirit, againſt whom that heavenly and learned man, Mr. Samuel Rutherford, ſeaſonably and ſucceſsfully appeared: Hacket, Copinger, and Arthington were of the ſame tribe; who lived a while wrapt up in Antinomian fancies, which at laſt brake forth into the higheſt and moſt horrid blaſphemies.

Another art they make uſe of to ſeduce the credulous, is a pretence unto the ſpirit of prophecy; and great ſucceſs they promiſe themſelves this way among the weak, but curious vulgar. And to this end Satan hath inſpired and employed ſome cunninger heads to invent very pleaſing predictions and prophecies, in favour of that party whom he deſigns to deceive. And how catching and bewitching theſe things are, gaining more reſpect among theſe vain ſpirits, than the divine unqueſtionable prophecies of ſcripture, this age hath had full and ſad experience.

Now the deſign of Satan in theſe things, is to gain credit of thoſe *ſects*, as people peculiarly favoured and beloved of God

‡ *Irretiti ſuis quibuſdam Enthuſiaſticis laqueis, unde ſe extricare ſummam putant impietatem: dementabant multos magnificis iſtis verbis, Illuminatio, Revelatio, Deificatio, &c.*

above others; as if they were the particular favourites of heaven, as Daniel was; and ſo to draw the multitude to admire their perſons, and eſpouſe their errors.

The remedies.

Now the *remedies* in this caſe are ſuch as follow.

Remedy 1. Whatever doctrine, or practice ſeeks credit to itſelf this way, falls juſtly thereby under ſuſpicion, that it wants a ſolid ſcripture-foundation.

God hath not left his people to ſeek ſatisfaction in ſuch uncertain ways as theſe; but hath given them a ſurer word of prophecy, to which they do well to take heed, 2 Pet. i. 19. He hath tied us to the ſtanding rule of the word, forbidding us to give heed to any other voice, or ſpirit, leading us another way, Ga. viii. 19. 2 Theſſ. ii. 1, 2. Gal. i. 8. Scripture-light is a ſafe and ſure light, a pleaſant and ſufficient light.

The ſcripture (ſaith Luther) is ſo full, that as for viſions and revelations, *Nec curo, nec deſidero*, I neither regard, nor deſire them. And when he himſelf had a viſion of Chriſt, after a day of faſting and prayer, he cried out, *Avoid, Satan, I know no image of Chriſt, but the ſcriptures.* An hankering mind after theſe things, ſpeaks a ſickly and diſtempered ſtate of ſoul, as longing after traſh in young diſtempered perſons, doth a diſtempered ſtate, or ill-habit of body.

Mr. William Bridges ſomewhere tells us of a religious lady of the empreſs's bed-chamber, whoſe name was Gregoria, who being greatly troubled about her ſalvation, wrote to Gregory, that ſhe would never ceaſe importuning him, 'till he had ſent her word, that he had obtained a revelation from heaven, that ſhe ſhould be ſaved; to whom he returned this anſwer; *Rem difficilem poſtulas et inutilem.* Thou requireſt of me that which is difficult to me, and unprofitable for thee.

Remedy 2. Conſider how often the world hath been abuſed by the tricks and cheats of that officious ſpirit, the devil, in ſuch ways as theſe.

What hath propagated idolatry among Heathens and Chriſtians more than this? *Hinc fluxerunt multae peregrinationes, monaſteria, delubra, dies feſti et alia*, ſaith Lavather, on Job xxxiii. Pilgrimages, monaſteries, ſhrines of ſaints, holidays, *&c.* have been introduced by this trick. 'Twere endleſs to give inſtances of it in the hiſtories of former ages *.

* Of the prophecies, viſions, and pretended inſpirations of Storke, Pfeiffer, Becold, Warendrop, *&c.* with the efficacy of them on the deluded

We have a notable late account of it among ourſelves, in a book entitled, [*A Diſcovery of the notorious Falſehood and Diſſimulation, contained in a book, ſtiled,* The goſpel way confirmed by miracles], licenſed and publiſhed 1649, wherein is laid open to the world, the free confeſſion of Ann Wells, Matthew Hill, *&c.* deluding the people of Whatfield in Suffolk, with ſuch pretended voices, viſions, prophecies and revelations, the like have ſcarcely been heard of in England ſince the reformation. Multitudes of people were deluded by them.

At length the Lord extorted from this woman a full confeſſion of the notorious falſeneſs of theſe things, by a terrible viſion of hell: her partizans laboured four days to ſuppreſs and ſtifle it, but to no purpoſe; for the horrors of conſcience prevailed with her to confeſs the notorious diſſimulations contained in that book, before the people of Whatfield, and a juſtice of the peace. And thus the Lord out-ſhot Satan in his own bow.

Remedy 3. Conſider how difficult, yea, and impoſſible it is for a man to determine, that ſuch a voice, viſion, or revelation, is of God; and that Satan cannot feign or counterfeit it; ſeeing he hath left no certain marks by which we may diſtinguiſh one ſpirit from another: *an albus? an ater?*

Sure we are, Satan can transform himſelf into an angel of light; and therefore abandoning all thoſe unſafe and uncertain ways, whereby ſwarms of errors have been conveyed into the world, let us cleave inſeparably to the ſure word of prophecy, the rule and ſtandard of our faith and duty.

Cauſe 15. Another way in which falſe teachers diſcover their ſubtilty with great ſucceſs is, in *timing* their aſſaults, and picking the proper ſeaſon, when the minds of men are moſt apt and eaſy to be drawn away by their fair and ſpecious pretences.

Such a ſeaſon as this, they find about the time of mens firſt converſion, or ſoon after their implantation into Chriſt. Now it is that their affections are moſt lively and vigorous, though their judgments be but weak. They have now ſuch ſtrong and deep apprehenſions of the grace and love of Chriſt, and ſuch tranſcendent zeal for him, that they eaſily embrace any thing whereby they conceive he may be honoured, and exalted. They have alſo ſuch deep apprehenſions, and powerful averſations at

deluded people, and fatal conſequences of them both to the deceived, and deceivers. *See Mr. Samuel Rutherford's Survey of the Spiritual Antichriſt, p.* 7, 8, 9, 10, 11.

to ſin, that they are in danger to fly even from truth, and duty itſelf, when it ſhall be artificially repreſented to them as ſin. For not only that which is *malum per ſe*, ſin indeed; but that which is *male coloratum*, painted with ſin's colours, is apt to ſcare and fright them.

Beſides, theſe young converts, or novices, have not had time to confirm, and root themſelves in the truth; and trees, newly planted, are much more eaſily drawn up, than thoſe that have ſpread, and faſtened their roots in the earth. 'Tis obſervable what a ſwarm of falſe teachers troubled the churches of Corinth, Galatia, and Philippi, at, and newly after their firſt planting: and what danger thoſe young Chriſtians were in, abundantly appears in the apoſtle's frequent cautions, and holy jealouſies over them: he bids them "beware of dogs, beware "of evil workers, beware of the concision," Phil. iii. 2. "I fear "leſt by any means as the ſerpent beguiled Eve through his "ſubtilty, ſo your minds be corrupted from the ſimplicity that "is in Chriſt," 2 Cor. xi. 3. he was afraid of the Galatians, leſt he had beſtowed upon them labour in vain, Gal. iv. 11. he would not give place to falſe brethren, no not for an hour, Gal. ii. 5. charges the Romans to receive them that were weak in the faith, but not to doubtful diſputations, Rom. xiv. 1. All which, and many more expreſſions, diſcover his grounded jealouſy, and their extraordinary danger of ſeduction at their firſt plantation. A novice, in Chriſtianity, is the perſon Satan ſeeks for: Strong believers are not in ſuch apparent danger as little ones in Chriſt, 1 John v. 21. *Little children, keep yourſelves from idols.*

And the reaſon is, becauſe keen affections, matched with weak judgments, give a mighty advantage to ſeducers. Children are apt to be taken with beautiful appearances, and fine ſhews; and erroneous teachers have the very knack to ſet a gloſs of extraordinary ſanctity upon their dangerous opinions. Hence thoſe perſons that promoted the ſect of the Nicolaitans, made uſe of a cunning woman, who for her ſkill in painting errors with the colours of truth, got the name of Jezebel, Rev. ii. 20. That queen was famous for the art of painting, 1 Kings xvi. and ſo was this falſe propheteſs: Indeed there was ſcarce any eminent ſect of Erroriſts, or Heretics, mentioned in church-hiſtory, but ſome curious feminine artiſt hath been employed to lay the beautiful colours upon it. So we find Simon Magus had his Helena; Carpocrates, his Marcellina; Montanus, his Priſcilla and Maximilla. And the curious colours of holineſs, zeal, and free-grace, artificially laid upon the face of error,

how wrinkled and ugly ſoever in itſelf, ſets it off temptingly and takingly to weak and injudicious minds.

Moreover, erroneous teachers are great boaſters: They uſually give out to the world, what extraordinary comforts they meet with in their way, which proves a ſtrong temptation to young converts, who have been ſo lately in the depths of ſpiritual trouble, to try at leaſt, if not to embrace it, for the expected comfort's ſake.

Ah, how many pious miniſters in England, upon ſuch grounds and pretences as theſe, have had their ſpiritual children rent from them as ſoon as born? they have travelled as in birth for them; and no ſooner did they begin to take comfort in the ſucceſs of their labours, but to the great grief and diſcouragement of their hearts, they have been this way bereaved of them. Thoſe that have owned them as their ſpiritual fathers one month, would ſcarce vouchſafe to own them, when they have met them in the ſtreets, another month. Many ſad inſtances I could give of this, and as remarkable as they are freſh and recent; but I ſilence particulars. Oh! ſee the advantage Satan and his inſtruments gain by nicking ſuch a critical ſeaſon as this is.

The cure, or remedy.

The remedies in this caſe, are twofold: the firſt reſpects the ſpiritual fathers, and the ſecond the ſpiritual children; both are concerned in the danger, and the Lord help both to attend to their duty.

Remedy 1. Let all thoſe whoſe miniſtry God bleſſes with the deſirable fruits of converſion, look carefully after the ſouls of young converts.

No nurſe ſhould be more tender and careful of her charge, than a miniſter ſhould be; and unto the care of a tender nurſe, Paul compareth his care over the young converts in Theſſalonica, 1 Theſſ. ii. 7. for, alas! they lie expoſed to all dangers, they are credulous, and ſeducers cunning; they want judgment to diſcern truth from error; have not yet attained unto ſenſes exerciſed, and age in Chriſt to diſcern good from evil; when errors are made palatable, children will be hankering after them; and ſeducers have the very art to make them ſo †.

Shepherds, look to your flocks; imitate the great Shepherd of the ſheep, who gathereth the lambs with his arms, and carries them in his boſom; viſit them frequently, exhort and warn

† ——*Veluti pueris abſynthia tetra medentes*
Cum dare conantur, prius oras pocula circum
Contingunt dulci mellis, flavoque liquore.

them diligently, and uſe all means to eſtabliſh them in the preſent truths.

Remedy 2. Let young converts, and weak Chriſtians, look carefully to themſelves by an heedful attendance unto the following truths.

Firſt, It is not ſafe to try, nor upon trial likely that you ſhould find Chriſt in one way, and comfort in another. God doth not uſually bleſs thoſe ways to mens comfort and edification, into which they turn aſide from that good way wherein they firſt met with Chriſt and converſion. The ſame miniſtry and ordinances, which are appointed and bleſſed for the one, are likewiſe appointed, and commonly bleſſed for the other, Eph. iv. 11, 12, 13.

Secondly, 'Tis a manifeſt ſnare of the devil (and you may eaſily diſcern it) to take you off from the great work you are newly engaged in, by entangling your minds in notions that are foreign to it. Your hearts are now warm with God; Satan labours this way to cool and quench them; the cunning cheat labours to ſteal away the ſweet and nutritive food which is before you, and lay the hard and dry bones of barren controverſies, and inſipid notions in their room. Your buſineſs is not to frame ſyllogiſms, or ſtudy ſolutions to cunning arguments about lower and leſſer matters, ſo much as it is by prayer, and ſelf-examination, to clear your intereſt in Chriſt, and to ſolve thoſe doubts that lie with weight upon your ſpirits, with reference to that great concern.

Thirdly, It is a ſad thing to grieve the hearts of thoſe faithful miniſters, that have travelled in pain for us, and rejoiced in in our converſion as the ſeal of their miniſtry. Oh! ſerve not your godly miniſters, as the hen is ſometimes ſerved, that hath long brooded, brought forth, and with much care and ſelf-denial, nouriſhed up young partridges, which, as ſoon as fledged, take the wing, and return no more to her.

Cauſe 16. There is yet another artifice of falſe teachers, to draw men into errors, and that is, by preſſing the conſciences of thoſe they have made ſome impreſſions upon, unto all *haſte* and *ſpeed*, openly to declare their new opinions, and avow and own them before the world; as knowing that this will rivet, and fix them to all intents and purpoſes.

When they find men under half convictions and ſtrong inclinations to their way, they are ſure then to ply them with a thick ſucceſſion of motives and arguments, to join themſelves by a free and open profeſſion, to that erroneous party, which are headed by themſelves.

And the arguments usually prested to this purpose are,

1. The danger of delay.

2. The comfort of declaring themselves.

1. They press them with the danger of the least delay, by telling them, That now they must live every day and hour in known sin, and hold the truth of God in unrighteousness, the evil whereof they skilfully aggravate; and the more tender and sensible the conscience is, the deeper impressions such discourses make, although the case indeed will not bear the weight they lay upon it, as having not that due allowance God gives of time and means of full information in matters of this nature; yea, possibly driving them into as great a snare by precipitation, and too hasty engagements under a doubting conscience.

2. They press them to a quick resolution with the expectations of abundance of comfort, inward peace and joy, which will result from a full engagement of themselves, and open declaration of their judgment; proselyting to a party being the main design they drive at.

This was the very art and method by which Satan prevailed with Eve to swallow the bait, Gen. iii. 5. "For God doth know, "that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, "and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;" *q. d.* The sooner thou tastest, the better; for the first taste will give thee a godlike knowledge, and marvellous advancement of thy understanding: didst thou but know the benefit that would accrue to thee hereby, thou wouldst not delay one moment: And thus by setting before her the speedy and immediate benefits of eating, he prevailed, and drew her into the fatal snare.

In this, the ministers of Satan imitate the ministers of Christ. As these press men to make haste to Christ, lest by consulting with flesh and blood, and listening to the temptations of Satan, hopeful inclinations should be blasted in the bud; so the others push men on to hasty resolutions, lest by hearkening to the voice of God's Spirit, and their own consciences, the design they have so far advanced, should be lost and disappointed. The ministers of Christ urge men to a speedy change of their company, and to associate themselves with spiritual and profitable Christians, as well knowing of what great use this will be to confirm and strengthen them in the ways of God: So errorists, in like manner, vehemently urge them to associate with their party, as knowing how one wedges in, and fixes another in the ways of error; for such causes Satan pushes on half convictions into hasty resolutions, quick dispatch being his great advantage. This the apostle intimates, Gal. i. 6. "I marvel (saith he) that

"ye are so soon removed," &c. ἀπὸ ταχέως, what, so soon! yes, if it had not been so soon, it might never have been at all: for errors (as one ingeniously observes) like fish, must be eaten fresh and new, or they will quickly stink.

The cure, or remedy.

The *remedies* and *preventatives*, in this case, are such as follow:

Remedy 1. Consider that hasty engagements, in weighty and disputable matters, have cost many souls dear.

As hasty marriages have produced long and late repentance; so hath the clapping up of an hasty match betwixt the mind and error. By entertaining of strange persons, men sometimes entertain angels unaware; but by entertaining of strange doctrines, many have entertained devils unawares. 'Tis not safe to open the door of the soul, to let in strangers in the night; let them wait till a clear day-light of information shew you what they are.

Remedy 2. Weighty actions require answerable deliberations. It was the worthy saying of Augustus Ceaser *, "That's soon "enough, that's well enough." There be many things to be considered, and thoroughly weighed, before a man change his judgment, and embrace a new doctrine or opinion. Luther, in his epistle to the ministers of Norimberg, cites an excellent passage out of Basil †, "He that is about to separate himself from "the society of his brethren, had need to consider many things "even unto anxiety, to beg of God the demonstration of truth, "with many tears; and to pass many solitary nights with waking "eyes, before he attempt, or put such a matter in execution." By the vote of the whole rational world, time and consideration ought to be proportionate to the weight of an undertaking.

Remedy 3. the only season men have to weigh things judiciously and impartially, is before their affections be too far engaged, and their credit and reputation too much concerned.

Men are better able to weigh doctrines and opinions, whilst they are other men's, than when they have espoused them, and made them their own. Before an opinion be espoused, the affections do not blind and pervert the judgment, as they do afterward. Self-love pulls down the balance at that end which

* *Satis celeriter quicquid commode geritur.*

† *Multa anxie considerare eum oportet, et multas noctes absumere insomnes, et cum multis lacrymis petere a Deo veritatis demonstrationem, qui se a fratribus separari vult.*

is next us*. If therefore, by hasty resolution, you lose this only proper and advantageous season of deliberation, you are not like to find such another.

Remedy 4. Trust not to the clearness of your own unassisted eyes, nor to the strength of your single reason; but consult, in such cases, with others that are pious and judicious, especially your godly and faithful ministers; and hearken to the counsels they give you. Paul justly wondered that the Galatians were so soon removed: and well he might; for, had they not a Paul to consult with, before they gave their consent to false teachers? or, if he was at a distance from them, about the work of the Lord, in remote places, had they no godly and judicious friends near them, whose prayers and assistances they might call in, as Daniel did, Dan. ii. 17. Woe unto him that is alone in a time of temptation, except the Lord be with him by extraordinary assistance and direction.

Remedy 5. *Lastly*, Suspect that opinion (as justly you may) for erroneous, that is too importunate, and pressing upon you, and will not allow you due time of consideration, and means of information: That which is a truth to-day, will be a truth to-morrow; but that which looks like a truth to-day, may be detected, and look like itself, an odious error, to-morrow: And this is the reason of that post haste that Satan and his factors make to gain our present consent, lest a speedy detection frustrate the suit, and spoil the design. The uses follow in six consectaries.

Consectary 1. From all that hath been said about errors, we see, in the first place, the great usefulness and plain necessity of an able, faithful, standing ministry in the church.

One special end of the ministry, is the establishment of the people's souls against the errors of the times, Eph. iv. 11, 14. "He "gave some apostles, *&c.* that we henceforth be no more children, "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, "by the slight of men," *&c.* Ministers are shepherds; and without a shepherd how soon will the flock go astray? Moses was absent but a few days from the Israelites, and at his return found them all run into snares of idolatry. A sheep is *animal sequax*, a creature that follows a leader. One straggler may mislead a whole flock. A minister's work is not only to feed, but defend the flock. "I am set (saith Paul) for the defence of the gospel," Phil. i. 17. An orthodox and faithful minister, is a double blessing

* *Perit omne judicium, cum res transit in affectum, i. e.* When the affections are biassed, judgment is lost.

to the people; but woe to that people, whoſe miniſters, inſtead of ſecuring them againſt errors, do cauſe them to err, Iſa. ix. 16. they are the dogs of the flock: Some in Scripture are called dumb dogs, who, inſtead of barking at the thief, bite the children; but faithful miniſters give warning of ſpiritual dangers. So did the worthy miniſters of London, Worceſterſhire, Devon, &c. in their teſtimonies againſt errors.

Conſectary 2. This diſcourſe ſhews us alſo how little quietneſs and peace the church may expect, till a greater degree of light and unity be poured out upon it; what by perſecutions from without it, and troubles from within, little tranquillity is to be expected. 'Tis a note of St. Bernard's, that the church hath ſometimes had *pacem a Paganis, ſed raro aut nunquam a filiis*, peace ſometimes from Pagan perſecutors, but ſeldom or never any peace from her own children.

We read, Zech. xiv. 7. the whole ſtate of the Chriſtian church, from the primitive days to the end of the world, ſet forth under the notion of one day, and that a ſtrange day too, the light of it ſhall *neither be clear nor dark, nor day nor night, but at evening-time it ſhall be light; i. e.* a day full of interchangeable and alternate providences; ſometimes perſecutions, hereſies, and errors prevail, and theſe make that part of the day dark and gloomy; and then truth and peace break forth again, and clear up the day. Thus it hath been, and thus it will be, until the evening of it, and at evening time it ſhall be light; then light and love ſhall get the aſcendant of error and diviſions. Moſt of our ſcuffles and contentions are for want of greater meaſures of both theſe.

Conſectary 3. From the manifold cauſes and miſchiefs of errors before mentioned, we may alſo ſee what a choice mercy it is to be kept ſound in judgment, ſtedfaſt and unmoveable in the truths and ways of Chriſt. A ſound and ſtedfaſt Chriſtian is a bleſſing in his generation, and a glory to his profeſſion. It was an high encomium of Athanaſius, *Sedem maluit mutare, quam ſyllabam; i. e.* He would rather loſe his ſeat, than a ſyllable of God's truth. Soundneſs of judgment muſt needs be a choice bleſſing; becauſe the underſtanding is the το ἡγεμονικον, that leading faculty which directs the will and conſcience of man, and they his whole life and practice. How often, and how earneſtly doth Chriſt pray for his people, that they may be kept in the truth? 'Tis true, orthodoxy in itſelf is not ſufficient to any man's ſalvation; but the conjunction of an orthodox head, with an honeſt ſincere heart, does always conſtitute an excellent

Chriſtian, Phil. i. 10. Happy is the man that hath an head ſo hearted, and an heart ſo headed.

Conſectary 4. By this diſcourſe, we may further diſcover one great and ſpecial cauſe and reaſon of the lamentable decay of the ſpirit and power of religion, amongſt the profeſſors of the preſent age.

'Tis a complaint more juſt than common, that *we do all fade as a leaf.* And, what may be the cauſe? Nothing more probable, than the waſting of our time and ſpirits in vain janglings, and fruitleſs controverſies, which the apoſtle tells us, Heb. xiii. 9. have not profited, *i. e.* they have greatly damnified and injured them that have been occupied therein. Many controverſies of theſe times grow up about religion, as ſuckers from the root and limbs of a fruit-tree, which ſpend the vital ſap that ſhould make it fruitful.

* 'Tis a great and ſad obſervation made upon the ſtate of England, by ſome judicious perſons, That after the greateſt increaſe of religion, both intenſively in the power of it, and extenſively in the number of converts, what a remarkable decay it ſuffered both ways, when, about the year forty-four, controverſies and diſputations grew fervent among profeſſors. Since that time, our ſtrength and glory have very much abated.

Conſectary 5. From this diſcourſe we may alſo gather, the true grounds and reaſon of thoſe frequent perſecutions which God lets in upon his churches and people: Theſe rank weeds call for ſnowy and froſty weather, to ſubdue and kill them.

I know the enemies of God's people aim at ſomething elſe; they ſtrike at profeſſion, yea, at religion itſelf; and according to their wicked intention, without timely repentance, will their reward be: But, whatever the intention of the agents be, the iſſues of perſecution are, upon this account, greatly beneficial to the church; the wiſdom of God makes them excellently uſeful, both to prevent and cure the miſchiefs and dangers of errors. If enemies were not, friends and brethren would be injurious to each other. Perſecution, if it kills not, yet, at leaſt, it gives check to the riſe and growth of errors: And, if it do not perfectly redintegrate and unite the hearts of Chriſtians, yet, to be ſure, it cools and allays their ſinful heats; and that two ways: (1.) By cutting out for them far better and more

* England in four years became a ſink, and puddle of all errors and ſects; no province, ſince the beginning of the world, in ſo ſhort a time produced ſo many Hereſies as this. *Honor. Reg. de Statu Eccleſ. Britan, p.* 1.

neceſſary work. Now, inſtead of racking their brains about unneceſſary controverſies, they find it high time to be ſearching their hearts, and examining the foundations of their faith and hope, with reſpect to the other world. (2.) Moreover, ſuch times and ſtraits, diſcover the ſincerity, zeal, and conſtancy of them we were jealous of, or prejudiced againſt before, becauſe they followed not us.

Conſectary 6. Laſtly, Let us learn hence, both the duty and neceſſity of charity and mutual forbearance: we have all our miſtakes and errors one way or other; and therefore muſt maintain mutual charity under diſſents in judgment.

I do not ſay, but an erring brother muſt be reduced, if poſſible, and that by ſharp rebukes too, if gentler eſſays be ineffectual, Tit. i. 13. and the wounds of a friend have more faithful love to them, than the kiſſes of an enemy; and if God make us inſtrumental by that, or any other method, to recover a brother from the error of his way, he will have great cauſe, both to bleſs God, and thank the inſtrument, who thereby ſaves a ſoul from death, and hides a multitude of ſins, James v. 20. 'Tis our duty, if we meet an enemy's ox or aſs going aſtray, to bring him back again, Exod. xxiii. 4. much more the ſoul of a friend. Indeed, we muſt not make thoſe errors that are none; nor ſtretch every innocent expreſſion to that purpoſe; nor yet be too haſty in meddling with contention, till we cannot be ſilent and innocent; and then, whatever the expence be, truth will repay it.

An APPENDIX: Containing a full, and modeſt Reply to Mr. Philip Cary's Rejoinder to my *Vindiciae Legis et Foederis.*

Manifeſting the badneſs of his Cauſe, in the feebleneſs, and impertinency of his Defence; and adding farther Light, and Strength to the Arguments formerly produced in Defence of God's gracious Covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. *and the Right of Believers Infants to Baptiſm, grounded thereupon.*

SIR,

NEXT to the not deſerving a reproof, is the due reception and improvement of it. You deſerve a ſharper reprehenſion for your temerity, and obſtinacy, than I am willing

to give you from the preſs; yet, in love to the truth, and your own ſoul, reprove you I muſt, and I hope God will enable me to be both mild in the manner, and convincingly clear in the matter, and cauſe thereof: 'Tis better to loſe the ſmiles, than the ſouls of men. I dare not neglect the duty of a friend, for fear of incurring the ſuſpicion of an enemy. Several learned, and eminent divines, who have ſeen what hath publicly paſſed betwixt you and me, have returned me their thanks, and think you ought to thank me too, for the pains I have taken to ſet you right, hoping you will evidence your ſelf-denial and repentance, by an ingenuous retraction of your errors.

But how will you deceive their expectations, and unbecome the character given you by your friends, when they ſhall find the true meaſure, both of your ability, and humility, drawn by your own pen, in the following rejoinder!

I have thoroughly conſidered your reply, in the manuſcript you ſent me, which, I hear, is now in the preſs; and in the following ſheets have given a full, and (I think) a final anſwer to whatſoever is material therein: And, it ſo falling out, that my diſcourſe of *Errors* was juſt going under the preſs, whilſt you rejoinder was there alſo, I thought it not convenient to delay my reply any longer, but to have my antidote in as great readineſs as might be, to meet it.

One inconvenience I eaſily foreſee, that the pages of your manuſcript, which I follow, may not throughout exactly anſwer to the print; but every intelligent reader will eaſily diſcern, and rectify that, if my bookſeller ſave him not that trouble, as I have deſired him to do.

As to the controverſy about the right of believers infant-ſeed to Baptiſm, you have altogether adventured it, the ſecond time, with the conſent of your partizans, upon the three hypotheſes, which (if I miſtake not) I have fully confuted and baffled in my firſt anſwer: but, if my brevity occaſioned any obſcurity in that, I hope you ſhall find it ſufficiently done here. Mean time you have given, and I accordingly take it for granted, that our arguments for Infant's Baptiſm, ſtand in their full ſtrength againſt you, till you can better diſcharge, and free your dangerous aſſertions from the errors and abſurdities in which they are now more involved and intricated than before.

The weaker any thing is, the more querulous it is. If ſcripture argument and clear reaſon will not ſupport the cauſe I undertake, I am reſolved never to call in paſſionate invectives and weak evaſions for my auxiliaries, as you have here done. The Lord give us all clearer light, tenderer conſciences, exemplary humility, and ingenuity.

VINDICIARUM VINDEX.

OR, A

REFUTATION of the weak and impertinent *Rejoinder* of Mr. PHILIP CARY.

Wherein he vainly attempts the Defence of his abſurd THESIS, to the great abuſe and injury of the Laws and Covenants of GOD.

AND muſt I be dipt, once more, in the water-controverſy? It is time for me to think of undreſſing myſelf, and making ready for my approaching reſt, and employ thoſe few minutes I have to ſpend, in more practical and beneficial ſtudies, for my own, and the church's greater advantage. And it is time for Mr. Cary to reflect upon his paſt follies, which have conſumed too much of his own, and others time, without any advantage; yea, to the apparent loſs and injury of the cauſe he undertakes to defend.

When I received theſe ſheets from him, in vindication of his *Solemn Call*, I was at a ſtand, in my own reſolutions, whether to let it paſs (without any animadverſions upon it) as a paſſionate clamour for a deſperate cauſe; or give a ſhort, and full anſwer to his confuſed and impertinent rejoinder. But conſidering that I had under hand, at the ſame time, the foregoing *Treatiſe* of *The Cauſes and Cures of Mental Errors*, and that though my honeſt neighbour diſcovers much weakneſs in his way of argumentation, yet it was like to meet with ſome intereſted readers, to whom, for that reaſon, it would be the more ſuitable; and how apt ſuch perſons are to glory in the laſt word; but eſpecially conſidering, that a little time and pains would ſuffice (as the caſe ſtands) to end the unſeaſonable controverſy betwixt us, and both clear and confirm many great and weighty points of religion: I was, upon theſe conſiderations, prevailed with, againſt my own inclination, to caſt in theſe few ſheets, as a Mantiſſa, to the former ſeaſonable, and neceſſary diſcourſe of *errors*, reſolving to fill them with what ſhould be worth the reader's time and pains.

As for the rude inſults, uncomely reflections, and paſſionate expreſſions of my diſcontented friend, I ſhall not throw back the dirt upon him, when I wipe it off from myſelf; I can eaſily forgive, and forget them too: The beſt men have their paſſions, Jam. v. 17. even *ſweet-briars*, and *holy thiſtles*, have their offenſive prickles. I conſider my honeſt neighbour under the ſtrength of a temptation; it diſquiets him to ſee the labours of many years, and the raiſed expectations of ſo great a conqueſt, and triumph over men of renown, all fruſtrated by his friend and neighbour, who had done his utmoſt to prevent it, and often foretold him of the folly, and vanity of his attempt. Every thing will live as long as it can, and *natura vexata prodit ſeipſam.* But, certainly, it had been more for truth's honour, and Mr. C—'s comfort, to have confeſſed his follies humbly to God, and have laid his hand upon his mouth.

The things in controverſy betwixt us, are great and weighty, *viz.* the true nature of the Sinai laws, in their complex body: the quality of God's Covenant with Abraham; and the diſpenſation of the New Covenant we are now under. Theſe are things of great weight in themſelves, and their due reſolutions are, at this time, ſomewhat the more weighty, becauſe my Antagoniſt hath adventured the whole controverſy of infants baptiſm upon them.

I have, in my *Vindiciæ Legis, &c.* ſtated the ſeveral queſtions clearly, and diſtinctly; ſhewn Mr. C. what is no part of the controverſy, and what is the very hinge upon which it turns; deſired him, if he made any reply, to keep cloſe to the juſt and neceſſary rules of diſputation, by diſtinguiſhing, limiting, or denying any of my propoſitions; that the matters in controverſy might be put to a fair, and ſpeedy iſſue. But, inſtead of that, I meet with a flood of words rolling ſometimes to this part, and then to another part of my anſwer, and ſo back again, without the ſteddy direction of art, or reaſon. There may, for ought I know, be ſome things of weight, in Mr. Cary's reply, if a man could ſee them for words; but, without ſcoff, or vanity, I muſt ſay of the rational part of it, as the poet ſaid of the over-dreſſed woman,——*Pars minima eſt ipſa puella ſui*, it is the leaſt part of it. To follow him in his irregular, and extravagant way of writing, were to make myſelf guilty of the ſame folly I blame him for: I am therefore neceſſitated to perſtringe them, and reduce all I have to ſay, under three general heads.

I. I ſhall clearly evince to the world, that Mr. Cary hath not been able to diſcharge, and free his own *theſis* from the

horrid conſequents, and groſs abſurdities, which I have laid to their charge in my firſt reply; but, inſtead thereof, in this feeble, and unſucceisful attempt to free the former, he hath entangled himſelf in more, and greater ones.

II. That he hath left my *arguments* ſtanding in their full ſtrength, againſt him.

III. And then I ſhall confirm, and ſtrengthen my three *poſitions*, which deſtroy the cauſe he manages, by ſome further additions of ſcripture, reaſon, and authorities, which, I hope, will fully end this matter betwixt us.

But, before I touch the particulars, two things muſt be premiſed, for the reader's due information.

1. That the controverſy about the true nature of the Sinai laws, both moral and ceremonial, complexly conſidered, is not that very hinge upon which the right of belivers infants to baptiſm depends; that ſtands as it did before, be the Sinai laws what they will: we do not derive the right of infants from any other law or covenant, but that gracious covenant which God made with Abraham, which was in being 430 years before Moſes's law; and was no way injured, much leſs diſannulled, by the addition of it, Gal. iii. 17. If Abraham's covenant be the ſame covenant of grace we are now under, the right of believers infants to baptiſm is ſecured, whatever the Sinai covenant prove to be: which I ſpeak not out of the leaſt jealouſy that Mr. Cary hath, or ever ſhall be able to prove it to be a pure Adam's covenant of works; but to prevent miſtakes in the reader.

2. It muſt be heedfully obſerved, alſo, that how free, gracious, and abſolute ſoever the New Covenant be, (for God forbid that I ſhould go about to eclipſe the glory of free grace, on which my ſoul depends for ſalvation) yet that will never prove Abraham's covenant to be an aboliſhed Adam's covenant of works, unleſs two things more be proved, which I never expect to ſee, *viz.*

Firſt, That Abraham, and his believing poſterity, were bound, by the very nature, and act of circumciſion, to keep the whole law in their own perſons, in order to their juſtification and ſalvation, as perfectly and perpetually, and under the ſame penalty for the leaſt failure, as Adam was to keep the law in paradiſe.

Secondly, It muſt be further proved, That Abraham, and all his believing offspring, who ſtood with him under that covenant, whereof circumciſion was the initiating ſign, were all

ſaved in a different way from that in which believers are now ſaved under the goſpel; for ſo it muſt be, if the addition of circumciſion made it unto them an Adam's covenant of works. But this would be a direct contradiction to the words of the apoſtle, ſpeaking of them who were under the covenant of circumciſion, Acts xv. 11. "But we believe, that through the "grace of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, we ſhall be ſaved, even as "they." If he ſay, they ſtood, indeed, under that covenant, as a pure covenant of works, but were ſaved by another covenant; and ſo for many ages, the church of God ſtood abſolutely under the covenant of works, and, at the ſame time, under the pure covenant of grace; the one altogether abſolute and free, the other wholly conditional: and though theſe two be in their own natures inconſiſtent, and deſtructive of each other, yet ſo it was, that all the ſaints, for many ages, were abſolutely under the one, and yet purely under the other: ſhall I be then cenſured for ſaying he ſpeaks pure contradiction?

Poſſibly my reader will be tempted to think I abuſe him, and that no man of common ſenſe can be guilty of ſuch an horrid abſurdity: I muſt, whatever reſpect I have for Mr. C. once more tell him, before the world, that this is not only his own doctrine, but that very doctrine upon which he hath adventured the whole cauſe, and controverſy of infants baptiſm, which I therefore ſay is hereby become a deſperate cauſe.

And this brings me to my firſt general head, *viz.*

I. Firſt, *That Mr. Cary hath not been able to free his theſis from this horrid abſurdity; but by ſtruggling to do it, hath (according to the nature of errors) entangled himſelf in more, and greater ones.*

Mr. Cary, in p. 174, 175. of his *ſolemn call*, was by me reduced to this abſurdity, which he there owns, in expreſs words, 'That Moſes, and the whole body of the people of Iſrael, were 'abſolutely under (without the exception of any) the ſevereſt 'penalties of a dreadful curſe; and that the Sinai covenant 'could be no other than a covenant of works, a miniſtration 'of death, and condemnation, and yet, at the ſame time, both 'Moſes, and all the elect, were under a pure covenant of goſpel-grace: and if theſe were two contrary covenants in themſelves, and juſt oppoſite the one to the other, as, indeed, they 'were, we have nothing to ſay, but, with the apoſtle, *O the 'depth,*' &c.

This, reader, is the poſition which muſt be made good by Mr. Cary, or his cauſe is loſt; deformed iſſues do not look as if they had beautiful truth for their mother: no falſe or abſurd

conclusion can regularly follow from true premises. But hence naturally and necessarily follows this.

Absurdity 1. That Abraham, Moles, and all the believers under the Old Testament, by standing absolutely under Adam's covenant of works, as a ministration of death and condemnation; and, at the same time, purely under the covenant of grace (as Mr. C. affirms they did) must necessarily, during their lives, hang in the midway between life and death, justification and condemnation; and, after death, in the midway between heaven and hell. During life, they could neither be justified nor condemned; justified they could not be, for justification is the soul's passing from death to life, 1 John iii. 14. John v. 24. Upon a man's justification his covenant and state are changed; but the covenant, and state of no man can be so changed, as long as he remains absolutely under the severest penalties, and condemnation of the law, as Mr. C. affirms they did.

Again, condemned they could not be, seeing all that are under the pure covenant of grace (as he saith they were at the same time) are certainly in Christ, and to such there is no condemnation, Rom. viii. 1. nor ever shall be. John v. 24. "He "that believeth, shall not come into condemnation, but is pas- "sed from death unto life." What remains, then, but that during life they could neither be perfectly justified, nor perfectly condemned; and yet, being absolutely under the severest penalties of Adam's covenant, they were perfectly condemned; and, again, being under the pure covenant of grace, they must be perfectly justified?

And then, after death, they must neither go to heaven, nor hell; but either be annihilated, or stick midway in *Limbo Patrum* (as the Papists fancy) betwixt both. No condemned person goes to heaven, nor any justified person to hell. His position, therefore, which necessarily infers this gross absurdity, is justly renounced, and detested, by learned, and orthodox divines.

The learned and acute * Turretine, the late famous professor of divinity at Geneva, proving that the *Sinai law* could not be a pure covenant of works; brings this very *medium* to prove it, as a known truth, allowed by all men: 'The Israelites '(saith he) with whom God covenanted, were already under 'Abraham's covenant, which was a covenant of grace, and 'were saved, in Christ, by it; therefore they could not be un-

* Turret. part 2d, p. 290.

'der the legal covenant. *Nemo enim simul potest duobus fœdéribus tota specie distinctis subesse*; because no man can be under two covenants, specifically different, at the same time, as these two are.'

That great, and renowned divine, Mr. William Strong *, gives four irrefragable arguments to prove that no man can stand under both these covenants, at the same time, which, in coordination, actually destroy, and make void each other. 'If 'the first covenant stand, there is no place for the second; and 'if the second stand, the first is made void. And this (saith he) 'will fully appear, if we consider the direct contrariety in the 'terms of those two covenants. For, (1.) The righteousness 'of the first covenant is in ourselves, but the righteousness of 'the second is the righteousness of another, 1 John v. 11, 12. '(2.) In the covenant of works, acceptation is first of the 'work, and afterwards of the person, Gen. iv. 7. but in the 'covenant of grace, the acceptation is first of the person, and 'then of the work, Gen. iv. 4. (3.) The first covenant was 'a covenant without a *priest*, but the second is a covenant 'with a *priest*. (4.) In the first covenant there is matter of 'glorying, but in the second there is none, Rom. iii. 27. So 'that these two can never consist, except you can compound, 'or reconcile these four opposites in the justification of the 'same person.'

To the same purpose, saith the excellent Mr. Samuel Bolton †. 'If the law were a covenant of works, then were the Jews under a different covenant from us, and so none of them were 'saved, which the apostle gainsays, Acts xv. 11. or else they 'were both under a covenant of works, and a covenant of 'grace; but that they could not be; they are utterly incon'sistent,' *Ergo.* And thus all sound divines speak. I may therefore say of Mr. Cary's *position*, as Ruvenus before me did; *omnem absurditatem excedere videtur*, it seemeth to exceed all absurdities. A man may more rationally suppose two natures, and essential forms, in one body, and place the same thing under divers *species*, in the *predicament* of *substance*; yea, it were more tolerable to affirm, that *ex duobus entibus per se fit unum ens per se*, than to place any (as Mr. C. places all) of God's people under two opposite covenants. If Mr. C. were absolutely under the condemnation of the law, would he not be purely justified, think you? Yet he places Abraham, Moses,

* Mr. Strong on the Covenant, p. 66, 67.
† Bolton's Bounds, p. 133.

and all believers with them, absolutely under the severest condemnation of the law, and the pure gospel-covenant at once.

But, to cover the shame and nakedness of his assertion, which places believers absolutely under Adam's covenant, he is fain to make use of two *fig-leaves*, as Adam did.

(1.) And the first attempt he now makes, p. 4, 5, 6, 7. of his *reply*, is by way of retortion, by telling us, 'That the same 'pretended absurdities do fall as heavily, and a great deal more, 'on our doctrine, who affirm the Sinai law (complexly taken) 'to be a covenant of faith, or grace, than upon his, who makes 'them two essentially different covenants: because we are forced to comprize perfect doing, with the curse for non-performance, under the same covenant with believing; and that it 'cannot be denied, but that all the people of God were absolutely under the Sinai covenant, Gal. iii. 23. *and* Gal. iv. 4, 5. 'and consequently under the curse,' Gal. iii. 10. This is the sum, and substance of his first answer.

Reply. I will not be tempted to expose my neighbour to derision for this his strange answer; but rather propound two sober queries to him, and the reader, *viz.* (1.) What orthodox divines he ever met with, and what are their names, who are forced to comprize perfect doing, with the curse for non-performance, under the same covenant with believing; and so make the two opposite covenants to be specifically one and the same? Name your men, with their books and pages; or retract, with shame and sorrow, what you have here abusively affirmed of them. Cameron, indeed, makes it a subservient covenant; the most a true, though obscure covenant of grace; but none comprize Adam's covenant with its curse in the new covenant. (2.) Whether it be imaginable, That the same absurdity can follow from their doctrine, that make the whole complex body of the Sinai law a covenant of grace, though more obscure, and so place all the people of God in those ages under it; as does necessarily follow his doctrine, who makes it a pure Adam's covenant of works, and places the church of God absolutely under the curse of it, and also under the pure covenant of grace at the same time? If grace and grace (how different soever in degrees of manifestation) be as opposite and repugnant, as grace and works, as justification and condemnation are, it is time for me to lay down my pen, for I have certainly lost my understanding to guide it any further.

But Mr Cary will say, If you do not, yet Mr. Roberts doth comprize both in one covenant. I say, you abuse Mr. Roberts

* in ſo affirming; for he ſaith, in that very place you refer to, that believing in Chriſt was ultimately and chiefly intended in the Sinai covenant; and perfect doing was only urged upon Iſrael in ſubordination, and tendency to that believing. And upon that ground it is, he affirms that covenant to be a covenant of faith, and ſo denominates it from the chief ſcope, and intent of it. He ſets not *doing* and *believing*, in co-ordination, or places the church under two oppoſite covenants, as you do; but places the law where it ought to be placed, in ſubordination to faith and Chriſt; and therefore you have abuſed that good man as well as me, and yourſelf moſt of all, in this your firſt impertinent and ſilly anſwer.

(2.) But you have one evaſion more, p. 7. where you ſay, ' *That how harſh, and dreadful ſoever the terms, or conditions,* ' *of the legal covenant were to thoſe that were under it, as Moſes, and the whole body of the Iſraelites, then were; yet the* ' *grace of the goſpel covenant far ſuperſeded, and was by far* ' *more victorious, powerful, and efficacious,*' Rom. v. 17, 20.

Reply. Worſe, and worſe; your diſcourſe mends like ſowre *ale* in *Summer*. Here you fancy the two covenants (under which you place the whole church of God) to be in a conflict one with the other; condemnation and juſtification, ſtruggling one with another, as I told you before they would: but, however, the grace of the new covenant prevails, at laſt, and gets the victory over the covenant of works. Very good; but then pray, Sir, if you pleaſe, anſwer me a plain queſtion, or two, at your leiſure.

Firſt, How far did the covenant of grace prevail againſt the covenant of works? Was it ſo far prevalent, and victorious, as utterly to vanquiſh and diſannul it, as a covenant of works to them? Or was it not? Was the victory, you ſpeak of, a complete or a partial one? If you ſay it was incomplete and partial, then you leave them (as I told you before you muſt) partly under the promiſe, and partly under the curſe; juſtified in part, and condemned in part. But if you ſay it was a complete and perfect victory, then it utterly diſſolved its obligation as a covenant of works; then they did not remain under two oppoſite covenants, as you affirmed they did; but, on their believing, changed their ſtate with their covenant, as we affirm they did.

Secondly, If you ſay it did not totally free them from the curſe of the covenant of works, but, however, prevailed ſo far, that they were not actually damned by virtue of the curſe; then

* Roberts on the Covenant, p. 775, 776, 777.

be pleaſed to anſwer me one queſtion more, *How was it poſſible for them to be abſolutely under the curſe of the law, (as you affirmed they were) and yet that curſe to be ſuperſeded by the covenant of grace, as here you ſpeak?*

To ſuperſede the curſe (though it be a phraſe I never met with before) if it ſignify any thing, it muſt ſignify this; that the covenant of grace cauſed the law to omit, forbear, or give over to curſe that people any more. But did, or can the law forbear, or ceaſe to curſe thoſe that are abſolutely under it, as a miniſtration of death and condemnation? Pray conſult Rom. iii. 19. and Gal. iii. 10. Are you aware what you ſay, when you place believers abſolutely under the curſe of the law, and then talk of the new covenant's victory over it; and, after all this, leave them as you do, abſolutely under the curſing power of the one, and ſtill under the victorious grace of the other? For ſhame, my friend, give up your abſurd notion, and repent of this folly; I would not willingly ſhame you before the world; I did all that in me lay to prevent it: but, however, *Pudor eſt medicina pudoris*, the only way you have left me to prevent your glorying in your ſhame, is this way, to make you aſhamed of your vain-glory. As for that ſcripture you alledge to countenance your fancy, Rom. v. 17, 20. you might, to as good purpoſe, have opened your Bible, and have taken the firſt ſcripture that came to hand, and it would have done your *poſition* leſs harm; for the apoſtle's ſcope there, is to demonſtrate the perfection of the abounding righteouſneſs of Chriſt, for the full diſcharge of believers from the guilt of ſin, and curſe of Adam's covenant; and cuts the throat of your *poſition*, which it is alledged to prove.

I have ſtood the longer upon the clearing of this firſt point; becauſe this being fully cleared, it runs through and clears the whole controverſy betwixt us. For now it will be evident to all, that neither Abraham's, nor Moſes his covenant (complexly taken, as Mr. Cary takes it) could poſſibly be, for this reaſon, an Adam's covenant of works; and if not a covenant of works, then, how dark or legal ſoever the diſpenſations of them were, they muſt needs be the ſame covenant of grace for ſubſtance, under which we are, and ſo the main controverſy betwixt us is hereby at an end.

I know not how many covenants of works, or how many of grace Mr. C. fancies there are; but orthodox divines conſtantly affirm, * That, as there were never but two ways of life to

* *Vide Bolton's Bounds, p.* 148.

when they ſought righteouſneſs by the works of it; nor could that miſtake of theirs be the ground of the controverſy betwixt the apoſtle and them: for it ſeems it was no miſtake, being, by God's intention, as well as its own primitive nature, promulgated at Sinai, as a true Adam's covenant.

Secondly, You deny the law was added to the promiſe, and aſk me, why it might not be added to the firſt covenant to reinforce that? I anſwer, Becauſe the ſcope of the place will not bear it, nor any good expoſitor countenance ſuch a fancy *. You make the Sinai law to be the ſame with that firſt covenant, and by ſo expounding the apoſtle, you make him ſay, either that the ſame thing was added to itſelf, (which muſt, in your own phraſe, be by a *correſpondency of identity*) or elſe that there are two diſtinct covenants of works (when indeed there is but one) and that the latter was added to the former. This is your way of expounding ſcripture, when driven to a ſtrait by dint of argument: nothing beſide ſuch a pure neceſſity could drive you upon ſuch an abſurdity.

It was added to the promiſe, (ſaith Dr. Reynolds †) by way of ſubſerviency and attendance, the better to advance and make effectual the covenant itſelf. Mr. Strong, upon the two covenants, ſaith, the apoſtle's meaning is, that the law was added as an appendix to the promiſe; but it may be, you had rather hear Dr. Criſpe's expoſition ‡, than his: for you ſay, had it been added to the promiſe, it would have given life. The doctor will at once give you the true ſenſe of the text, and with it a full anſwer to your objection. *Though life* (ſaith he) *be not the end of the law, yet there are other ſufficient uſes of it, requiring the promulgation thereof: it was publiſhed to be an appendix to the goſpel*, Gal. iii. 19. *And this ſuppoſes*, 1. *The priority of the goſpel to the law.* 2. *The principality of the promiſe of life by Chriſt above the law.* 3. *The conſiſtence of the law, and goſpel. They may well ſtand one by another, as an houſe, and the addition to it may.* That it was with ſuch an intention added to the promiſe, I have met with no man that had front enough to deny or ſcruple it, before you; and that the Jews did miſtake its chief ſcope and uſe, from whence we denominate it a covenant of grace, the generality of godly and learned divines con-

* Προστεθη *poſita, pro appoſita, hoc eſt, Promiſſioni adjecta*, Beza.

† *Vide* Dr. Reynold's Uſe of the law, p. 378. full up to my ſenſe, and p. 371.

‡ *Dr. Criſp, lib.* 4. *ſerm* 9.

ſtantly affirm. See Mr. Anth. Burg. *de lege*, p. 227. Bolton's Bounds, p. 160, 161. Mr. Samuel Mather on the Types, p. 11. with multitudes more, whoſe citations would even weary the reader. And what you urge from Mr. Pool's Annotations on 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7. It makes nothing at all to your purpoſe; for it is manifeſt, the annotator there takes the moral law in itſelf, ſtrictly taken, and as ſet in oppoſition to the goſpel, which it never was ſince the fall, but by the ignorance, and infidelity of unregenerate men.

You alſo labour to ſhelter your erroneous fancy under the authority of Dr. Owen; but you manifeſtly abuſe him in your citation; for in that very place you refer to, he ſpeaks ſtrictly of the covenant of works made with Adam in paradiſe, and plainly diſtinguiſhes it from the Sinai covenant, which ſufficiently ſhews his judgment in the point. For theſe are his own words which you ſuppreſſed in the citation, '* As to the Sinai covenant, and the New teſtament, with their privileges thence emerging, they belong not to our preſent argument.' This paragraph you wilfully omit, that you might include that which his words plainly exclude. In the ſame place he tells you, that David's and Abraham's covenant, was for eſſence the covenant of grace, notwithſtanding the variations made in it: But you take and leave as beſt ſuits your deſign †.

Once more, in p. 16, 17. *&c.* of my *Vindiciae legis*, you find yourſelf pinched with another dilemma, from Lev. xxvi. 40. 41, 46. whence I plainly proved, that there is a promiſe of pardon found in the Sinai diſpenſation, to penitent ſinners. That this promiſe was given at Mount Sinai, by the hand of Moſes, is undeniable, from ver. 46. That it contained the relief of a gracious remiſſion to penitent ſinners, is as undeniable from ver. 40, 41. If you ſay, this promiſe belongs to Moſes his diſpenſation, (as ver. 46. tells you it did) then, there is remiſſion of ſins

* Dr. Owen of Juſtification, p. 396, 397, vindicated from Mr. C.'s groſs miſrepeſentations.

† But if you ſee the Doctor's judgment, in concurrence with all his brethren, you have it in theſe very words: Although this covenant hath been variouſly adminiſtred in reſpect of ordinances and inſtitutions, in the time of the law, and ſince the coming of Chriſt in the fleſh; yet, for the ſubſtance and efficacy of it, to all its ſpiritual and ſaving ends, it is one and the ſame; upon account of which various diſpenſations, it is called the Old and New Teſtament. *Vide Declaration of the faith, and order of the congregatigual churches in England, p.* 16. *at the Savoy, Oct.* 12, 1658.

found in the Sinai laws. If you ſay it only refers to Abraham's covenant of grace; then that covenant of grace appears to be conditional, which you utterly deny.

Now what is your reply to this? (1.) You object my own words in the Method of Grace, p. 326. as if you had never read the juſt, and fair vindication I had before given you of them, p. 134, 135 of my firſt reply to you. At this rate men may continue controverſies to the world's end. Sir, there are many witneſſes, that you are very well acquainted with my Method of Grace. (2.) You ſay, p. 31. of your reply, that that covenant could not be conditional, *becauſe a condition implies merit, either of congruity, or condignity.* This is a further diſcovery of your ignorance of the nature of conditions, as well as covenants; but that point belonging to the laſt head of controverſy between us, I ſhall refer it thither.

It were eaſy for me to inſtance in many more abſurdities which Mr. C. cannot eluctate, and to prove them upon him as eaſily as to name them; but I will not preſs him too far; what hath been named, and proved already, is more than enough to convince the reader that my firſt argument is left ſtanding in its full force and ſtrength againſt him, *viz.*

Argum. 1. That propoſition can never be true, which neceſſarily draws many horrid, and groſs abſurdities after it, by juſt conſequence. But ſo doth this: *Ergo,*

Argum. 2. My next argument, *Vindiciae, &c.* p. 27. is as ſecure as the firſt. It was this; If Adam's covenant had one end, namely, the happineſs, and juſtification of men by their own obedience; and the law at Sinai had quite another end, namely, to bring ſinners to Chriſt, by faith, for their righteouſneſs; the one to keep him within himſelf, the other to take him quite out of himſelf; then the Sinai law cannot poſſibly be the ſame with Adam's covenant of works in paradiſe.

But ſo ſtands the caſe, Rom. x. 4. "Chriſt is the end of "the law for righteouſneſs to every one that believeth."

Therefore they cannot be the ſame, but two different covenants.

All that touches this argument, is but three lines in the 49th page of your reply; where you ſay, you have ſufficiently anſwered, and cleared this, in p. 169, 172. of your *former* diſcourſe, from the corrupt interpretation by me faſtened thereon.

Now if the reader will give himſelf the trouble to examine thoſe pages, he ſhall find that Mr. C. there allows that very interpretation which he here calls corrupt; and ſaith it comes all

to one reckoning with his own. If this will overthrow my ſecond argument, it is gone.

Argum. 3. My third argument was drawn from Acts vii. 38. in this form:

If Chriſt himſelf were the angel by whom the laws were delivered to Moſes, which are there called *the lively oracles of God*; then the law cannot be a pure Adam's covenant of works: for it is never to be imagined that ever Jeſus Chriſt himſelf ſhould deliver to Moſes ſuch a covenant, directly oppoſite to all the ends of his future incarnation.

But it is more than probable, from that text, that it was Chriſt which delivered the law to Moſes on the mount. *Ergo.*

To this argument he ſaith not one word, in p. 49. of his reply, where he cites a part of it, nibbling a little at that expreſſion [*The lively oracles of God,*] thinking it unimaginable the Sinai law ſhould be ſuch; when as the apoſtle Paul, Rom. vii. 10. found the commandment to be unto death; and the apoſtle, 2 Cor. iii. 6, 7. calls it a *miniſtration of death.* I muſt therefore leave Mr. C. to reconcile thoſe two ſcriptures. And withal, I muſt tell him, that * Spanhemius gives the ſame ſenſe I do of Acts vii. 38. as the current judgment of Chriſtians againſt the Jews, that it was not a created angel, but Chriſt himſelf.

Argum. 4. The laſt argument I urged, was from Rom. ix. 4. and thus it may run.

No ſuch covenant as by the fall had utterly loſt all its promiſes, privileges, and bleſſings, and could retain nothing but curſes and puniſhments, could poſſibly be numbered among the chief privileges in which God's Iſrael gloried.

But the law given at Sinai was numbered among their chief privileges, Rom. ix. 4. *Ergo.*

To this he only ſaith, p. 57. of his reply, 'That the law, 'even as it was a covenant of works, was a privilege ineſtimable, beyond what all others enjoyed; becauſe the very curſes 'and puniſhments annexed thereunto, in caſe of the leaſt failure, were of excellent uſe to convince them of their ſin and 'miſery without Chriſt, and their neceſſity therefore of a Saviour; which was the proper work of the law, as a covenant 'of works; which advantage all other nations wanting, it might 'well be numbered among the chief privileges they were inveſted with.'

But (1.) If the law were intended by God, to be an Adam's covenant to them (as Mr. C. ſaith it was) where then is the

* Fran. Spanhem. Elench. Controv. p. 552.

privilege of God's Iſrael above other nations? (2.) If their privilege conſiſted in the ſubſerviency of that law to Chriſt (as he here intimates it did) then he yields the thing I contend for. For this being its chief ſcope and end, we do hence juſtly denominate it a covenant of grace, though more obſcure and legally adminiſtred. And in this judgment moſt of our ſolid divines concur. Mr. Charnock on the *Attributes*, p. 390. is clear and judicious in the point. * Mr. Samuel Bolton, in that excellent book called, *The Bounds of Chriſtian Liberty*, gives nine ſolid arguments to prove the law was not ſet up at Sinai as a covenant of works. † Mr. Anth. Burgeſs gives us ſix arguments to prove the ſame concluſion. ‡ Mr. Greenhill on Ezekiel xvi. gives us demonſtration from that context, that ſince it was a marriage-covenant, as it appears to be ver. 8. it cannot poſſibly be a diſtinct covenant from the covenant of grace. The incomparable § Turretine learnedly and judiciouſly ſtates this controverſy; and both poſitively aſſerts, and by many arguments fully proves, that the Sinai law cannot be a pure covenant of works, or a covenant ſpecifically diſtinct from the covenant of grace. It were eaſy to fill pages with allegations of this kind; but I hope what hath been ſaid, may ſuffice for this point.

But ſtill Mr. Cary complains, that I have all this while but threatened his arguments to prove them fallacious, or to have four terms in them; and therefore he hath drawn out ſome ſelect arguments, as he calls them, p. 37. to try my ſkill upon. I will neither tire my reader in a fooliſh chaſe of ſuch weak and impertinent arguments as he there produceth, nor yet wholly neglect them, leſt he glory in them as unanſwerable. And therefore to ſhew him the fate of the reſt, I will only touch his firſt argument, which being his *argumentum palmarium*, deſervedly leads the van to all the reſt. And thus it runs upon all four.

That covenant that is not of faith, muſt needs be a covenant of works, yea, the very ſame for ſubſtance with that made with Adam.

But the ſcripture is expreſs, that the law is not of faith, Gal. iii. 12. *Ergo.*

The law is conſidered two ways in ſcripture. (1.) Largely,

* Bolton's Bounds, p. 130, *&c.*
† Burgeſs, *de Lege*, p. 225.
‡ Greenhill, *in Loc.*
§ Turretine, part 2. p. 228, 289.

for the whole *Mosaical Oeconomy*, comprehensive of the ceremonial as well as moral precepts; and that law is of faith, as the learned * Turretine hath proved by four scripture arguments, *part second*, p. 292, 293. Because it contained Christ the object of faith, *&c.* Because it compelled men to seek Christ by faith. Because it required that God be worshipped, which he cannot rightly be without faith. And because Paul describes the righteousness of faith in those very words whereby Moses had declared the precepts of the law, Deut. xxx. 11, 12, 13. Again, the law in scripture is taken strictly for the *moral law* only, considered abstractly from the promises of grace, as the legal justiciaries understood it. These are two far different senses and acceptations of the law. Your *major proposition* takes the law in its large complex body, as appears by your 3*d* page. Your *minor proposition*, which you would confirm by Gal. iii. 12. takes the law strictly and abstractly, as it is set disjunctly from, yea, in opposition to faith and the promises; and so there are two sorts of law in your argument, and consequently your argument is fallacious, as all its fellows be, and runs (as I told you before) *upon all four.*

I hope this may suffice, with respect to the Sinai covenant, controverted betwixt me and my neighbour, to evince that it cannot be what he asserts it to be, even an Adam's covenant of works: And that I have discharged what I undertook to prove, with respect to this covenant, namely, That Mr. C. cannot free his position from the gross absurdities with which I loaded it, but endeavouring to do that, hath incurred many more: that his reply hath left my arguments standing in their full strength against him, and that the position I have set up against him, is well founded in scripture; and hath the general concurrence and consent of learned, holy, and orthodox divines.

To conclude, Let the grave and learned Dr. Edw. Reynolds, in his excellent treatise of *the Use of the Law*, determine this controversy betwixt us, *p.* 371, *&c.* where designedly handling this doctrine from Rom. vii. 13. '*That the law was revived* '*and promulgated anew on mount Sinai, by the ministry of Mo-*

* The law is said not to be of faith, Gal. iii. 12. Not as it is taken in a large sense, to denote the Mosaic Oeconomy, but strictly, as when it is taken for the moral law abstractly, and separate from the promises of grace; as the self-justiciaries did understand it who sought life from it; for it is proved that faith was also commanded in the Sinaitic covenant, *&c.*

'*ſes, with no other than evangelical and merciful purpoſes,*' he abundantly confirms my ſenſe and arguments, and ſaves me the labour of refuting the principal, and moſt of yours: where carrying before him the whole context of Gal. iii. from the 15th to the 23d, he clearly carries his doctrine with it, proving from ver. 15. 'That God's covenant with Abraham was perpetual and immutable, and therefore all other ſubſequent acts of God (ſuch as the giving of the law was) do ſome way or other refer unto it. (2.) From v. 16. he further P. 376. proves, That as God's covenant with Abraham is moſt conſtant, in regard of the wiſdom and unvariableneſs of him that made it; ſo it can never expire for want P. 377. of a ſeed to whom it is made. (3.) From *ver.* 17. he proves, That if another law be made after the promiſe, which, *prima ſpecie*, and, in ſtrict conſtruction, doth imply a contradiction in the terms, and nature of the former law; then it is certain, that this latter law muſt be underſtood in ſome other ſenſe, and admit of ſome other ſubordinate uſe, which may well conſiſt with the being, and force of the former covenant. (4.) From ver. 18. he proves, that the coming of the law hath not voided the promiſe, and that the law is not of force (as you vainly dream) towards the ſeed to whom the promiſe is made; and therefore if it be not to ſtand in a contradiction, it follows that it muſt ſtand in ſubordination to the goſpel; and ſo tend to evangelical purpoſes.' (5.) He further proves his concluſion from ver. 19. which ſhews for what end the law was added, προσετεθη. 'It was not (ſaith he) ſet up alone, as a thing in groſs by itſelf; as an adequate, complete, ſolid rule of righteouſneſs, as it was given to Adam in Paradiſe: much leſs was it publiſhed to void and diſannul any precedent covenant; but ſo far was it from abrogating, that it was *added to the promiſe* by way of ſubſerviency, and attendance; the better to advance and make effectual the covenant itſelf, and that until the ſeed ſhould come, which, whether it reſpect Chriſt perſonal, or myſtical, in either ſenſe (ſaith he) it confirms the point we are upon, *viz. That the law hath evangelical purpoſes.* If the ſeed be underſtood of the perſon of Chriſt, then this ſhews that the law was put to the promiſe, the better to raiſe and ſtir up in men the expectations of Chriſt, the promiſed ſeed. But if we underſtand by ſeed, the *faithful* (which I rather approve;) then the apoſtle's meaning is this, That as long as any are P. 379. either to come into the unity of Chriſt's body, and have the covenant of grace applied to them, &c. ſo long there

'will be uſe of the law, both to the unregenerate, to make them fly to Chriſt, and thoſe that are already called, that they may learn to caſt all their faith, hope, and expectation of righteouſneſs upon him ſtill. This then manifeſtly ſhews, that there was no other intention in publiſhing the law, but with reference to the ſeed: that is, with evangelical purpoſes to ſhew mercy: not with reference to thoſe that periſh, who would have had condemnation enough without the law.' And further ſtrengthens his concluſion from the laſt words of ver. 19. 'That it was ordained by *angels* in the hands of a Mediator. This (ſaith he) evidently declares, That the law was publiſhed in mercy and pacification, not in fury or revenge; (for the work of a Mediator is to negotiate peace, and treat of reconcilement betwixt parties offended) whereas, if the Lord had intended death in the publiſhing of the law, he would not have proclaimed it in the hand of a Mediator, but of an executioner. (6.) From ver. 20. P. 380.

'Thoſe words (ſaith he) ſhew why the law was publiſhed in the hand of a Mediator, *viz.* that they ſhould not deſpair and ſink under the fear of his wrath. For as he made a covenant of promiſe to Abraham, and his ſeed; ſo he is the ſame God ſtill, one in his grace and mercy towards ſinners. *God is one, i. e.* in ſending this Mediator, he doth declare to mankind, that he is at peace and unity with them again. Moſes was the repreſentative, and Chriſt the ſubſtantial and real Mediator. *God is one, i. e.* he carries the ſame purpoſe and intention both in the law and in the goſpel; namely, benevolence, and deſire of reconcilement with men. (7.) To ſum up all that hath been ſpoken touching the uſe of the law in a plain ſimilitude; P. 381. P. 382. P. 384.

'Suppoſe we a prince ſhould proclaim a pardon to all traitors, if they ſhould come in and plead it; and after this ſhould ſend forth his officers to attack, and impriſon, examine, convince, arraign, threaten, and condemn them: Is he now contrary to himſelf? Hath he repented of his mercy? No, but he is unwilling to loſe his mercy, deſirous to have the honour of his mercy acknowledged unto him. The ſame is the caſe between God and us. To Abraham he made a promiſe of mercy and bleſſedneſs to all that would plead intereſt in it for the remiſſion of their ſins; but men were ſecure and heedleſs of their eſtate, *&c.* Hereupon the Lord publiſhed by Moſes a ſevere and terrible law; yet in all this God doth but purſue his firſt purpoſe of mercy, and take P. 385.

'a courſe to make his goſpel accounted worthy of all acceptati-
'on; which clears the general point, *That God in the publication*
'*of the law by* Moſes, *on mount* Sinai, *had none but merciful and*
'*evangelical intentions.* And once more, The law was not
'publiſhed by Moſes on mount Sinai, as it was given
P. 386. 'to Adam in paradiſe, to juſtify or to ſave men. And
'p. 385. it is not given, *ex primaria intentione*, to
'condemn men. In conſequence to all which he ſaith, p. 388,
'389. that to preach the law alone by itſelf, is to prevent the
'uſe of it; neither have we any power or commiſſion ſo to do.
'It was publiſhed as an *appendant* to the goſpel, and ſo muſt
'it be preached It was publiſhed in the hand of a Mediator, and
'muſt be preached in the hand of a Mediator. It was publi-
'ſhed evangelically, and it muſt be ſo preached.'

See how this agrees how with p. 173. of your *call*, and how the ſeveral parts of diſcourſe of this ſound and eminent doctor (which I have been forced to ſum up and contract) do abundantly confute your vain notions of the law, and cut the very nerves of your beſt arguments, if they had any nerves in them: for indeed it is *moles abſque nervis.*

It were eaſy for me to repreſent the ſenſe of many other eminent divines in perfect harmony with the doctrine of this great and excellent divine, who have ſubſtantially proved the point I defend againſt you: But it is enough.

II. Let us next examine what execution his *reply* hath done upon my ſecond *poſition*, ſet up in direct oppoſition to him; namely, *That God's covenant with* Abraham, * Gen xvii. *Unto which circumciſion was annexed, is for its ſubſtance, the ſelf-ſame covenant of grace with that which Gentile-believers, and their Infant-ſeed, are now under.*

Here I have abundant cauſe again to complain, that Mr. C. hath ſo formed his anſwers, as if he had never read the book he undertakes a reply to. And I do verily believe, the greateſt part of his reply was made at random, before ever my printed book was in his hands. For he hath not at all conſidered the ſtate of the queſtion, as I there gave it him; nor kept himſelf to the juſt and neceſſary rules of diſputation, as I earneſtly deſired he would. However, it is not complaints, but confirmation and vindication of my arguments, which is my proper work. I ſhall therefore recite them briefly, and vindicate and confirm them ſtrongly; contracting all into as few words as can expreſs the ſenſe and argument of the point before me.

* Abraham's covenant, Gen. xvii. the covenant of grace.

Argum. 1. If circumciſion be a part of the ceremonial law, and the ceremonial law was dedicated by blood; whatſoever is ſo dedicated, is by you confeſſed to be no part of the covenant of works; then circumciſion can be no part of the covenant of works, even by your own confeſſion. But it is ſo. *Ergo.*

Vindiciae legis, &c. p. 42.

Reply. To this Mr. C. returns a *tragical complaint*, inſtead of a *rational anſwer*. *Inſinuates my falſe and groſs abuſe of him. Appeals to his reader. Tells him, I have taken a liberty to ſay what I pleaſe, as if there were no future judgment to be regarded. And that I can expect no comfort another day, without repentance now. For thoſe things that have thus paſſed betwixt him and me, ſhall again be reviſed, and ſet in order before me. That he is weary of noting my miſcarriages of this kind. That there is hardly a page or paragraph in my whole reply, but abounds with tranſgreſſions of this nature. He begs the Lord to forgive me; and wiſhes he could ſay,* Father forgive him, for he knoweth not what he doth; *as if my ſin were greater than the ſin of thoſe that ſtoned* Stephen, *or crucified* Chriſt.

P. 98.

Reply. Either I am guilty or innocent in the matter here charged upon me by Mr. C. If guilty, I promiſe him an ingenuous acknowledgment. If innocent (as both my conſcience, and his own book will prove me to be) then I ſhall only ſay, *He knoweth not what ſpirit he is of.* The caſe muſt be tried by his own book, and it will quickly be decided. Theſe are the very words in his *Solemn call*, p. 148, 'He (that is, Mr. Sedg-'wick) makes no diſtinction betwixt the ceremonial covenant 'that was dedicated with blood, and the law written in ſtones 'that was not ſo dedicated. How ſtrangely doth he confound 'and obſcure the word and truth of God, which ought to have 'been cleared and diſtinctly declared to thoſe he had preached 'or written to?' With much more, p. 149, 150, 151. where he ſaith, 'It is plain, that the law written in ſtones, and the 'book wherein the ſtatutes and judgments were contained, 'were two diſtinct covenants, and delivered at diſtinct ſea-'ſons, and in a diſtinct method; the one with, the other with-'out a Mediator; the one dedicated with blood and ſprink-'ling, the other (that we read of) not ſo dedicated.'

Now let the reader judge whether I have deſerved ſuch tragical complaints and dreadful charges for inferring from theſe words, That the ceremonial law being by him pronounced a diſtinct covenant from the moral law, which he makes all one with Adam's covenant; delivered at a diſtinct ſeaſon, and in

a diſtinct method; the ceremonial law with a *Mediator*, the moral law without a *Mediator*; the ceremonial law dedicated with blood and ſprinkling, the moral law not ſo dedicated: let him judge (I ſay) whether I have wronged him in ſaying, that by his own confeſſion, circumciſion being a part of this ceremonial law, it can therefore be no part of the covenant of works.

Exception. But Mr. Cary hath two things to ſay for himſelf, (1.) That in the ſame place he makes the ceremonial law no other than a *covenant of works*: And the wrong I have done him, is by not diſtinguiſhing (as he did) betwixt *a covenant of works*, and *the covenant of works*. Here it ſeems lies my guilt, upon which this dreadful outcry againſt me is made.

Reply. But if I ſhould chance to prove, that there never was, is, or can be any more than one covenant of works; and that any one covenant which is diſtinguiſhed from it (as he confeſſes the ceremonial law was) by a Mediator, and the blood of ſprinkling, can be no part of that covenant of works; what then will become of Mr. C's diſtinction of *a covenant of works*, and *the covenant of works?* Now the matter is plain and evident, That as there never were, are, or can be more than two common heads appointed by God, namely, *Adam* and *Chriſt*, 1 Cor. xv. 45, 46, 47, 48. Rom. v. 15. 17, 18, 19. ſo it is impoſſible there ſhould be more than two covenants, under which mankind ſtands, under theſe two common heads. And the firſt covenant once broken, it is utterly impoſſible that fallen man ſhould ever attain life that way, or that ever God ſhould ſet it up again with ſuch an intention and ſcope, 'unleſs (as 'Mr. Charnock ſpeaks *) he had reduced man's body to the duſt 'and his ſoul to nothing, and framed another man to have go-'verned him by a covenant of works; but that had not been 'the ſame man that had revolted, and upon his revolt was 'ſtained and diſabled.' If Mr. C. therefore be not able to prove more covenants of works with mankind than one, let him rather bluſh at his ſilly diſtinction betwixt *a* covenant of works, and *the* covenant of works. For indeed he makes at leaſt four diſtinct covenants of works, one with Adam, two with Moſes; one moral, the other ceremonial; and a fourth with Abraham at the inſtitution of circumciſion, Gen. xvii.

(2.) If it appear (as it clearly doth) that as there never was, is, or can be any more than one covenant of works, ſo whatſoever covenant is diſtinguiſhed from it by a Mediator, and dedication by the ſprinkling of blood (as he ſaith the ceremonial

* Charnock on the attributes, p. 390.

law was) cannot poſſibly, for the reaſons he gives, be any part or member of Adam's covenant of works; then, I hope, I have done Mr. C. no wrong in my aſſumption from his own words, for which he ſo reviles and abuſes me. But this will appear as plain as the noon-day light: For a covenant with a Mediator, and dedicated by ſprinkling of blood, doth, and neceſſarily muſt, eſſentially difference ſuch a covenant from that covenant that had no mediator, nor dedication by blood. To deny this, were to confound law and goſpel, Adam's and Chriſt's covenant; but the diſtinction betwixt them is his own, therefore my aſſumption was juſt. That this blood was typically the blood of Chriſt, and that the Holy Ghoſt ſignified the one by the other, is plain from Heb. ix. 7, 8. And I never met with that man that ſcrupled it before Mr. Cary. So then my firſt argument to prove Abraham's covenant of circumciſion to be the covenant of grace, and not an Adam's covenant, or any part thereof, ſtands firm after Mr. C's paſſionate reply, which I hope the Lord will pardon to him, though he had ſcarce charity enough left to deſire a pardon for his friend, who had neither wronged the truth, nor him.

Argum. 2. My ſecond argument was this. If circumciſion was the ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith, it did not pertain to the covenant of works; for the righteouſneſs of faith and works are oppoſite.

But circumciſion was the ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith, Rom. iv. 11. *Ergo.*

The ſum of what he anſwers to this, p. 72, 73, *&c.* (as far as I can pick his true ſenſe out of a multitude of needleſs words) is this, 'He confeſſes this argument ſeems very plauſible; but, 'however, Abraham was a believer before circumciſion; and 'tho' indeed it ſealed the righteouſneſs of faith to him, yet it 'ſealed it to him only as the father of believers; and denies 'that ever Jacob, or Iſaac, or any others enrolled in that covenant were ſealed by it; but to all the reſt, beſide Abraham, 'it was rather a token of ſervitude and bondage.' This is the ſum and ſubſtance of his reply.

Reply. But, Sir, let me aſk you two or three plain *queſtions.* (1.) What is the reaſon you ſilently ſlide over the *queſtion* I aſked you, *p.* 41. of my *Vindiciæ, &c?* Did you find it an hot *iron* which you durſt not touch? It is like you did. My queſtion was this, *Had* Adam's *covenant a ſeal of the righteouſneſs of faith annexed to it, as this had,* Rom. iv. 11. *The righteouſneſs of faith is evangelical righteouſneſs, and this circumciſion ſealed. Say not it was to* Abraham *only that it ſealed*

it, for it is an injurious reſtriction put upon the ſeal of a covenant which extended to the fathers as well as to Abraham: *however, you admit that it ſealed evangelical righteouſneſs to* Abraham, *but I hope you will not ſay, that a ſeal of the covenant of works (for ſo you made circumciſion to be) ever did, or could ſeal evangelical righteouſneſs to any individual perſon in the world.*

I find you a man of great confidence, but certainly here it failed you; not one word in reply to this. (2.) 'I told you 'your diſtinction was invented by Bellarmine, and ſhewed you 'where it was confuted by Dr. Ames: but not a word to that.' (3.) I ſhewed, 'That the extending of that ſeal to all believers, 'as well as Abraham, is moſt agreeable to the drift and ſcope 'of the apoſtle's argument, which is to prove, that both Jews 'and Gentiles are juſtified by faith, as Abraham was: and that 'the ground of juſtification is common to both: and that how 'great ſoever Abraham was, yet in this caſe he hath found no-'thing whereof to glory. And is not your expoſition a notable 'one, to prove the community of the priviledge of juſtification, 'becauſe the ſeal of it was peculiar to Abraham *alone?*' p. 47, 48.

Sir, you have ſpent words enough upon this head to tire your reader. But why can I not meet with one word among them, that fairly advances to my argument? or anſwer the important *queſtions* before you, upon which the matter depends? If this be all you have to ſay, I muſt tell you, you are but a weak manager of a bad cauſe, which is the leſs hazard to truth.

Arg. 3. In the covenant of circumciſion, Gen. xvii. God makes over himſelf to Abraham, and his ſeed, *to be their God*, or gives them a ſpecial intereſt in himſelf.

But, in the covenant of works, God doth not, ſince the fall, make over himſelf to any to be their God, by way of ſpeecial intereſt.

Therefore the covenant of circumciſion cannot be the covenant of works.

The ſum of your *reply*, in p. 76. is under two heads.

(1.) You boldly tell me, That 'God doth in the covenant of 'works, make over himſelf to ſinners, to be their God, by way 'of ſpecial intereſt; but it being upon ſuch hard terms, that it 'is utterly impoſſible for ſinners, that way, to attain unto life, 'he hath therefore been pleaſed to aboliſh that, and make a new 'covenant;' and bring Exod. xx. 1. to prove it.

Reply. This is new, and ſtrange divinity, with me. (1.) That God ſhould become a people's God, by way of ſpecial in-

tereſt, by virtue of the broken covenant of works; this wholly alters the nature of that covenant: for then it was a law that could give life, contrary to Gal. iii. 21. unleſs you can ſuppoſe a ſoul that is totally dead in ſin, to have a ſpecial intereſt in God, as his God. (2.) This anſwer of yours yields the controverſy about the nature of the Sinai law; for this very conceſſion of yours is the *medium* by which our divines prove it to be a covenant of grace. (3.) This conceſſion of yours confounds the two covenants, by communicating the eſſential property, and prime privilege of the covenant of grace, to Adam's covenant of works. Either, therefore, expunge Jer. xxxi. 33. as a covenant of grace, "I will be their God, and they ſhall be my "people;" or allow that in Gen. xvii. 7. to be ſpecifically the ſame; and that Exod. xx. though more obſcurely delivered. (4.) You aſſert, 'That God may actually become a people's 'God by way of ſpecial intereſt, and yet the ſalvation of that 'people be ſuſpended upon impoſſible terms.' You ſent them before into *purgatory*, but by this you muſt ſend them directly to hell: for if the ſalvation of God's peculiar people be upon impoſſible terms, it is certain they cannot be ſaved And, laſtly, it is an horrid reflection upon the wiſdom, and goodneſs of God, who never did, or will make any covenant, wherein he takes fallen men to be his peculiar people, and make over himſelf to be their God; and yet not make proviſion for their ſalvation in the ſame covenant, but leave their ſalvation for many ages, upon hard, and impoſſible terms, *i. e.* leave them under damnation.

(2.) I told you, in my *Vindiciæ, &c.* p. 49. that you were fain to cut Abraham's covenant, Gen. xvii. into two parts; and make the firſt to be the pure covenant of grace, which is the promiſſory part, to the 9th verſe, and the reſtipulation (as you call it, p. 205.) to be as pure a covenant of works: which I truly ſaid was *a bold action*; and in ſo calling it, I gave it a ſofter name than the nature of it deſerved.

The ſum of what you reply to this, is, 1. By denying the matter of fact, and charging me with miſrepreſentation; * and in the next page confeſſing the whole charge, ſaying, Though the promiſe and the reſtipulation, mentioned verſ. 7, 8, 9. make but one and the ſame covenant of circumciſion; yet there are two covenants mentioned in that context, the firſt between God and Abraham himſelf, verſ. 2, 4. the other between God and Abraham, and his natural poſterity alſo, verſ. 7, 8, 9, 10. the

* *Mr. C's Defence, p. 79.*

former you call a covenant of grace, the latter a covenant of works. And p. 81. you affirm, that after God had entered the covenant of grace with Abraham, verſes 2, 4. that Abraham himſelf was required to be circumciſed by the command of God, as a token of the covenant of works. And then, after ſome unbecoming ſcoffs for miſplacing, ver. 7, 8. where ver. 9, 10. ſhould be; as alſo, of Gen. xii. for Gen. xvii. (whether by the ſcribe, my ſelf, or the preſs, I cannot ſay: but in each place ſufficient light is given to ſet you right in the ſcope, and argument of my diſcourſe) you tell us, That *how harſh and unlikely ſoever it may ſeem to man's carnal reaſon, that the latter, to wit, the covenant of works made with* Abraham, ver. 9, 10. *muſt needs make void the covenant of grace made with him*, verſ. 2, 4. *yet the apoſtle gives a quite contrary reſolution of it*, Gal. iii. 17. And after all, p. 79. in return to my *argument*, That the circumciſion of Abraham, and his ſeed, ver. 9, 10. could not poſſibly be a condition of Adam's covenant of works from the nature of the act: becauſe Paul himſelf circumciſed Timothy, Acts xvi. 1, 2, 3. and aſſerts it to be a part of his liberty, Gal. ii. 3, 4. which could never be, if in the very nature of the act it had bound Timothy to keep the law for juſtification; and had been contrary to the whole ſcope of the apoſtle's doctrine: but it became an obligation only from the intention of the agent. All that you ſay to this, p. 95. is, 'That as for Paul's compliance with the Jews, 'however the caſe ſtood in that reſpect, that is certain, That 'the bleſſed apoſtle would never have expreſſed himſelf with 'that vehemency he doth, Gal. v. 2, 3. if this had been only 'the ſenſe of the Jewiſh teachers, or that circumciſion in its 'own nature did not oblige to the keeping of the whole law; 'and that this is only my corrupt gloſs upon the text.'

Reply. If there be but one covenant made betwixt God and Abraham, in that 17th of Geneſis, and you make two, not only *numerically*, but *ſpecifically* diſtinct, yea, oppoſite covenants of it, then you boldly cut God's covenant with Abraham in two, and are guilty of an inſufferable abuſe of the covenant of God: But the former is true; therefore ſo is the latter. You ſay, *p.* 223, 224. of your call, 'That at the ſecond and fourth verſes 'God made a covenant with Abraham himſelf alone, but at ver. '7. he makes the covenant of circumciſion betwixt himſelf and 'Abraham, and his natural ſeed alſo; and faith, ver. 7. *And*, 'or, according to the old tranſlation, *moreover*; as proceeding to ſpeak of another covenant than what he had been before 'inſiſting on.'

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Now I would ſoberly ask, (1.) What vouchers you have amongſt expoſitors for this your raſh and daring aſſertion? I find not a man that hath trode this path before you, and I hope none will be hardy enough to follow: you certainly ſtand alone, and it is pity but you ſhould. (2.) Where do you find the juſt parts of the new covenant in the 2d and fourth verſes? Is it not altogether promiſſory, on God's part, without any teſtipulation on Abraham's? For you have excluded ver. 1, 7. 10. from that which you call God's covenant of grace with him. And then for your covenant of works, ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. you make this to be the promiſſory part of that covenant, "to be a God "unto thee, and to thy ſeed after thee;" and again, ver. 8. *I will be their God.* Was ever ſuch a promiſe as this found in a covenant of works? Tell me whatever God ſaid more in the new covenant, than he ſaith here? O bleſſed covenant of works, if this be ſuch! (3.) Tell me whether you can ſatisfy your own conſcience with the anſwers you have given to my firſt argument againſt your paradoxical, yea, heterodoxical expoſition? I told you, That if ver. 7, 8, 9, 10. contain another covenant, *viz.* of works, entered by God with Abraham, and his ſeed, it muſt needs make void the former covenant, ver. 2, 4. for wherever the covenant of works takes place, the covenant of grace gives place; they cannot conſiſt, as I have abundantly proved before. Do you verily think thoſe words of the apoſtle, Gal. iii. 17. which you bring as a foundation to ſupport your ſingular, and ſinful expoſition, *viz. And this I ſay, That the covenant that was confirmed before of God in Chriſt, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot diſannul, that it ſhould make the promiſe of none effect;* do you think (I ſay) that, in that, or any other text, the apoſtle oppoſes the two covenants made (as you fancy) with Abraham, Gen. xvii. Or doth he not there ſpeak of God's covenant with Abraham, as diſtinguiſhed from the law made 430 years afterward? (4.) Have you ſatisfied your own judgment, and conſcience, in the reply you make to that unanſwerable objection from Paul's circumciſing of Timothy, Acts xvi. 2, 3. where you have the plain matter of fact before you, that he was circumciſed by Paul; and this fact of his juſtified as a part of the liberty he had in Chriſt, Gal. ii. 3, 4. * from whence it evidently appears,

* He is bound not ſimply and abſolutely from the nature of the work itſelf, (*viz.* Circumciſion,) but in regard of the intention of him who performs it; and ſuch an opinion being ſupported, &c. *Poal in the place.*

That circumciſion, in its own nature, did not ſimply, and abſolutely oblige men to the keeping of Moſes's law for righteouſneſs, but only for the intention, or opinion of the perſon. And though you call this my corrupt gloſs upon the text, therein you groſly abuſe me: the gloſs is neither corrupt, nor my own; but the unanimous judgment of all ſound expoſitors of the text, as you might ſee, were you capable of ſeeing it, in a collection of their judgments upon that text, Gal. v. 2, 3, 4. in Mr. Pool's Synopſis. And though Eſtius thinks the act of circumciſion might be obligatory to the Gentiles, to whom the law was not given; yet it was not ſo to the Jews that believed, and ſuch was Timothy. But why do I refer you to the judgment of *commentators?* The very reaſon of it may convince you. For,

If the very act of circumciſion did, in its own nature, oblige all on whom it paſſed, to keep the whole law for their righteouſneſs, then Paul ſo obliged Timothy, and all others on whom he paſſed it, to keep the law for their righteouſneſs.

But Paul did not oblige Timothy, or any other on whom he paſſed it, by the very act of circumciſion ſo to keep the law.

Therefore the very act of circumciſion, in its own nature, did not oblige all on whom it paſſed, to keep the whole law for righteouſneſs.

You may ponder this *argument* at your leiſure, and not think to refute it at ſo cheap a rate, as by calling it a corrupt gloſs of my own. And thus I hope I have ſufficiently fortified, and confirmed my third argument, to prove Abraham's covenant to be a covenant of grace. My fourth was this:

Argum. 4. That which in its direct, and primary end, teacheth man the corruption of his nature by ſin, and the mortification of ſin by the Spirit of Chriſt, cannot be a condition of the covenant of works.

But ſo did circumciſion in the very direct, and primary end of it; therefore, *&c.*

Your reply to this, is, '*That when I have ſubſtantially* '*proved that the Sinai covenant, as it contained the paſſover,* '*ſacrifices, types, and appendages, under which were veiled* '*many ſpiritual myſteries relating to Chriſt, and mortification* '*of ſin by his grace, and Spirit, to be no covenant of works,* '*but a goſpel-covenant; you will then grant, with me, that the* '*preſent argument is convincing;*' p. 66, 67. of your reply.

Reply. Sir, I take you for an honeſt man, and every honeſt man will be as good as his word; either I have fully proved againſt you, that the Sinai law (taken in that latitude you here

expreſs it) is not an Adam's covenant of works, or I have not. If I have not, doubtleſs you have reſerved your more pertinent, and ſtrong replies in your own breaſt, and truſt not to thoſe weak, and ſilly ones, which you ſee here baffled, and have only ſerved to involve you in greater abſurdities than before. But if you have brought forth all your ſtrength (as in ſuch a deſperate ſtrait no man can imagine but you would) then I have fully proved the point againſt you; and if I have, I expect you to be ingenuous, and candid, in making good your word, that you will then grant, with me, that this *argument* is convincing, to the end for which it was deſigned. And ſo I hope we have fully iſſued the controverſy between us, relating to God's covenant with Abraham. You have, indeed, four *arguments*, p. 59, 60, 61, 62. of your Reply, to prove Abraham's covenant a covenant of works, of the ſame nature with Adam's covenant.

(1.) Becauſe as life was implicitely promiſed to Adam upon his obedience, and death explicitely threatened in caſe of his diſobedience, which made that properly a covenant of works; ſo it was in the covenant of circumciſion, Gen. xvii. 7, 8. compared with ver. 10, 14.

Reply. This argument, or reaſon, can never conclude; becauſe as God never required of Abraham, and his children, perſonal, perfect, and perpetual obedience to the whole law for life, as he did of Adam; ſo the death, or cutting off, ſpoken of here, ſeems to be another thing from that threatened to Adam. Circumciſion (as I told you before) was appointed to be the diſcriminating ſign betwixt Adam's ſeed, and the Heathen world; and the wilful neglect thereof is here threatened with the cutting off by civil, or eccleſiaſtical excommunication from the commonwealth and church of Iſrael, as Luther, Calvin, Paraeus, Muſculus, *&c.* expound; not by the death of body and ſoul, as was threatened to Adam, without place for repentance, or hope of mercy.

(2.) You ſay Abraham's covenant could not be a covenant of faith, becauſe faith was not reckoned to Abraham for righteouſneſs in circumciſion, but in uncircumciſion, Rom. iv. 9, 10.

Reply. This is weak reaſoning; circumciſion could not belong to a goſpel-covenant, becauſe Abraham was a believer before he was circumciſed. You may as well deny the Lord's Supper to be the ſeal of a goſpel-covenant, becauſe the partakers of it are believers before they partake of it. Beſide, you cannot deny but it ſealed the righteouſneſs of faith to Abraham: And I deſired you before, to prove that a ſeal of the covenant of works is capable of being applied to ſuch an uſe and ſervice,

which you have not done, nor ever will be able to do; but politicly slided by it.

(3.) You say it cannot be a covenant of grace, because it is contra-distinguished to the righteousness of faith, Rom. iv. 13.

Reply. The law in that place is put strictly for the pure law of nature, and *metaleptically* signifies the works of the law, which is a far different thing from the law, taken in that latitude wherein you take it. And, is not this a pretty argument, that because the promise to Abraham, and his seed, was not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith: therefore the covenant God made with Abraham, and his seed, Gen. xvii. cannot be a gracious, but a legal covenant? This promise, mentioned Rom. iv. 13. was made to Abraham long before the law was given by Moses; and free grace, not Abraham's legal righteousness, was the impulsive cause moving God to make the promise to Abraham, and to his seed: and their enjoyment of the mercies promised, was not to be through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. By what rule of art the scripture is alledged to prove God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. to be a covenant of works, I am utterly to seek: if it be only because circumcision was added to it, that's answered over and over before, and you neither have, nor can reply to it.

(4.) Lastly, It cannot (say you) be a covenant of grace, because it is represented to us, in scripture, as a bondage-covenant, Acts xv. 10. *&c.* Gal. v. 1.

Reply. It is time, I see, to make an end; your discourse runs low, and dreggy. Do you think it is one and the same thing to say, That the ceremonial law was a yoke of bondage to them that were under it, and to say it was an Adam's covenant? Are these two parallel distinctions in your *logic?* Alas! Sir, there is a wide difference; the difficulty, variety, and chargeableness of those ceremonies, made them, indeed, burthensome and tiresome to that people; but they did not make the covenant, to which they were annexed, to become an Adam's covenant of works: for in the very next breath, ver. 11. the apostle will tell you, *they were saved;* yea, and tells us, that *we shall be saved, even as they.* So that either they that were under this yoke, were saved by faith in the way of free grace, as we now are; or we must be saved in the way of legal obedience, as they were. Take which you please, for one of them you must take. *We shall be saved, even as they,* Acts xv. 10, 11.

If you can make no stronger opposition to my arguments, than such as you have here made, your cause is lost, though your confidence, and obstinacy, remain: it were easy for me to

ſill more paper than I have written on this ſubject, with names of principal note in the church of God, who, with one voice, decry your groundleſs poſition, and conſtantly affirm, That the law, in the complex ſenſe you take it, as it comprehends the ceremonial rites, and ordinances, whereunto circumciſion pertains, is, and can be no other than the covenant of grace, tho' more obſcurely adminiſtered. But becauſe Latin authors are of little uſe to you, and among Engliſh ones, the judgment of Dr. Criſp *, I ſuppoſe, will be *inſtar omnium* with you; I will recite it faithfully, out of his ſermon upon the two covenants, where he makes the old and new covenant, to be, indeed, two diſtinct covenants of grace, (for which I ſee no reaſon at all) but proves the former to be ſo in theſe words:

'It is granted of all men, that in the covenant of works 'there is no remiſſion of ſin, there is no notice of Chriſt; but 'the whole buſineſs, or employment of the prieſts of the old 'law, was altogether about remiſſion of ſins, and the exhibiting 'and holding forth of Chriſt in their faſhion unto the people. 'In the 15th of Numbers, ver. 28. (I will give you but one 'inſtance) there you ſhall plainly ſee, that the adminiſtration 'of that prieſtly office had remiſſion of ſins, as the main end of 'that adminiſtration. *If a ſoul ſin through ignorance, he ſhall 'bring a ſhe-goat unto the prieſt, and he ſhall make an atone-'ment for the ſoul that ſinneth ignorantly, and it ſhall be forgi-'ven him:* See, the main end is adminiſtring forgiveneſs of 'ſins.

'And that Chriſt was the main ſubject of that their miniſtry, 'is plain; becauſe the apoſtle ſaith, in the verſe before my text, 'that all that adminiſtration was but a ſhadow of Chriſt, and 'a figure, for the preſent, to repreſent him, as he doth expreſs 'in the 9th chapter of this *epiſtle*. And the truth is, the uſual 'general goſpel that all the Jews had, was in their ſacrifices, 'and prieſtly obſervations.———

'So that it is plain, the adminiſtration of their covenant was 'an adminiſtration of grace, and abſolutely diſtinct from the 'adminiſtration of the covenant of works.' And what can be ſaid more abſolutely, and directly contradictory to your *poſition*, than this is? And yet again, p. 250. ſpeaking to that ſcripture, Heb. viii. 8. 'where the apoſtle diſtinguiſhes of a '*better*, and a *faulty*, of firſt, and ſecond, he ſaith, (finding 'fault with them) "The days come, when I will make a new 'covenant with the houſe of Iſrael, and with the houſe of Ju-

* Vol. II. Serm. 2. pag. 237. 248, 250.

'dah; not according to the covenant I made with their fa-'thers, when I took them by the hand to lead them out of 'the land of Egypt;" and (as Jeremiah adds it, for the apoſ-'tle takes all this out of Jer. xxxi. 31. (*although I was an huſ-'band to them;* and, in the cloſe of all, *your ſins and iniquities, 'will I remember no more.*———Here are two covenants, a *new 'covenant*, and the *covenant he made with their fathers.* Some 'may think it was the covenant of works at the promulgation 'of the moral law; but mark well that expreſſion of Jeremiah, 'and you ſhall ſee it was the covenant of grace. "For (ſaith 'he) not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, 'although I was an huſband unto them." *How can God be 'conſidered as a husband to a people under the covenant of works 'which was broken by man in innocency, and ſo became diſannul-'led, or impoſſible, by the breach of it? The covenant of works 'run thus:* Curſed is every one that continueth not in all 'things that are written in the book of the law; and in 'the day thou ſinneſt, thou ſhalt die the death. *Man had 'ſinned before God took him by the hand, to lead him out of the land 'of Egypt, and ſin had ſeparated man from God: How then can 'God be called an husband in the covenant of works? The cove-'nant, therefore, was not a covenant of works, but ſuch a cove-'nant as the Lord became an husband in, and that muſt be a co-'venant of grace,'* &c.

How the doctor makes good his two diſtinct covenants of grace, I ſee not, nor expect ever to ſee proved, and is not my preſent concernment to enquire; but once it is evident, by what he hath here ſaid, that the ceremonial law, whereof circumciſion is a branch, can be no other than the covenant of grace. And nothing is more common, among our divines, than to prove, not only the Sinai law, but God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. to be the covenant of grace, by this *medium, That God having entered into a covenant of grace with* Abraham *before, would never bring him under a covenant of works afterwards, which muſt nullify, and void the former.* And, beſides, ſuch a covenant of works as you make this, was never heard of in the world, wherein God promiſes to be a God to Abraham, and his ſeed, in their generations, upon the rigorous, and impoſſible terms of Adam's covenant.

By this time, I preſume, you muſt feel the force of thoſe arguments produced againſt your vain and groundleſs notion; and how little you are able to deliver your *theſis* from them, but the more you ſtruggle, the more ſtill you are entangled. Go which way you will, your abſurdities follow you,

as your ſhadow,——*haeret lateri lethalis arundo.* Leaving, therefore, all your abſurdities upon you, till God ſhall give you more illumination and ingenuity to diſcern and acknowledge them, I ſhall paſs on to the examination of your third poſition, which led you into theſe other groſs miſtakes; and if God ſhall convince you of your error in this point, I hope it may prove a means of recovering you out of the reſt; which, in love to your ſoul, I heartily deſire.

3. Your third *poſition* is, *That God's covenant with* Abraham, Gen. xvii. *can be no other than the covenant of works, becauſe circumciſion was the condition of it: For* (ſay you) *the new covenant is altogether abſolute and unconditional.*

Of the Conditionality of the New Covenant.

This queſtion, Whether the covenant of grace be conditional, or abſolute, was moved (as a learned man obſerves) in the former age, by occaſion of the controverſy about juſtification, betwixt the Proteſtants and Papiſts. Among the Proteſtants, ſome denied, and others affirmed the conditionality of the goſpel-covenant: Thoſe that denied it, did ſo for fear of mingling law and goſpel, Chriſt's righteouſneſs and man's, as the Papiſts had wickedly done before. Thoſe that affirmed it, did ſo out of fear, alſo; leſt the neceſſity of faith and holineſs, being relaxed, Libertiniſm ſhould be that way introduced. But if the queſtion were duely ſtated, and the ſenſe of its terms agreed upon, the goſpel-covenant may be affirmed to be conditional, to ſecure the people of God from Libertiniſm, without the leaſt diminution of the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, or clouding the free grace of God.

I did, in my firſt anſwer to your *call*, endeavour to prevent the needleſs trouble you have here given yourſelf, by a ſuccinct ſtate of the queſtion; telling you the controverſy betwixt us, is not, (1.) Whether the goſpel covenant requires no duties at all of them that are under it? Nor, (2.) Whether it requires any ſuch conditions as were in Adam's covenant, namely, perfect, perſonal, and perpetual obedience, under the penalty of the curſe, and admitting no place of repentance? Nor, (3.) Whether any condition required by it on our part, have any thing in its own nature meritorious of the benefits promiſed? Nor, (4.) Whether we be able in our own ſtrength, and by the power of our free will, without the preventing, as well as the aſſiſting grace of God, to perform any ſuch work or duty as we call a condition? Theſe things, I told you, were to be excluded out of this controverſy. But the only queſtion betwixt us, is,

Whether in the new covenant, ſome act of ours (though it have no merit in it, nor can be done in our own ſingle ſtrength) be not required to be performed by us antecedently to a bleſſing, or privilege, conſequent by virtue of a promiſe: and whether ſuch an act or duty, being of a ſuſpending nature to the bleſſing promiſed, it have not the true, and proper nature of a goſpel-condition?

In your *reply* (contrary to all rule and reaſon) you include, and chiefly argue againſt the very particulars by me there excluded; and ſcarcely (if at all) touch the true queſtion, as it was ſtated, and by you ought, accordingly, to have been conſidered. I might therefore juſtly think myſelf diſcharged from any further concernment with you about it; for if you will include what I plainly exclude, you argue not againſt mine, but another man's poſition, which I am not concerned to defend. You here diſpute again ſtmeritorious conditions, which I explode, and abhor, as much as yourſelf. You ſay, p. 34. of your *reply*, that a condition plainly implies ſomething of merit, by way of condignity, or congruity; which is falſe, and turns the queſtion from me to Papiſts. And were it not more for the clearing up of ſo great a point, for the inſtruction and ſatisfaction of others, than any hope you give me of convincing you, I ſhould not have touched this queſtion again, unleſs I had found your replies more diſtinct and pertinent. But finding the point in controverſy of great weight, I will once more tell you,

1. What the word [*condition*] ſignifies.
2. In what ſenſe it is by us uſed in this controverſy.
3. Eſtabliſh my arguments for the conditionality of the new covenant.

1. And firſt, we grant, That neither our word [*condition*], nor your term [*abſolute*], are either of them found in ſcripture, with reſpect to God's covenanting with man; ſo that we contend not about the ſignification of a ſcripture term. But though the word *conditional* be not there, yet the thing being found there, that brings the word *conditional* into uſe in this controverſy. For we know not how to expreſs thoſe ſacred particles, εἰ, ὅτι, ἐὰν μη, μόνον, οὐδὲ οὐχ, &c. *if, if not, unleſs, but if, except, only*, and the like, which are frequently uſed to limit and reſtrain the grants and pivileges of the new covenant, Rom. x. 9. Matth. xviii. 3. Mark. v. 36. Mark xi. 26. Rom. iv. 24. I ſay, we know not how to expreſs the true ſenſe and force of theſe particles in this controverſy, by any other word, ſo fit and full as the word *conditional* is. Now this word *condition* being

a law term, is variously used among the Jurists; and the various use of the word, occasions that confusion which is found in this controversy. He, therefore, that shall clearly distinguish the various senses and uses of the word, is most likely to labour with success in this controversy. I shall, therefore, briefly note the principal senses and uses of the term, and shew in what sense we here take it. Of conditions, there be two sorts,

1. Antecedent.
2. Consequent conditions.

As to the latter, namely, *consequent conditions*, you yourself acknowledge, *p.* 100. 'That in the outward dispensation 'of the covenant, many things are required of us, in order 'unto the participation or enjoyment of the full end of the 'covenant in glory.'

So then the covenant is acknowledged to be consequently conditional *, which is no more than to say with the apostle, "Without holiness no man shall see God;" or that, "If any "man draw back, his soul shall have no pleasure in him," *&c.* Our controversy therefore is not about consequent conditions, laid by God upon believers, after they are in Christ and the covenant; the covenant, so considered, *a posteriori*, will not be denied to be conditional. The only question is about antecedent conditions, and of these we are here to consider,

1. Such as respect the first sanction of the covenant in Christ.
2. Such as respect the application of the benefits of the covenant unto men †.

As to the first sanction of the covenant in Christ, we freely acknowledge it hath no previous condition on man's part, but depends purely and only upon the grace of God, and merit of Christ: So that our question proceeds about such antecedent conditions only, as respect the application of the benefits of the

* If the promises of the covenant concerning the end, as distinct from the means of salvation, are the promises meant, then no body can deny that these are conditional, because they always are made on condition of faith and repentance. *Turretine.*

† If the covenant is viewed in respect of its being first set on foot, and established in Christ, it has no previous condition, but is founded only on God's free favour and Christ's merit; but if it is viewed as to the acceptance and application in the believer, it has for its condition faith, which unites a man to Christ, and so instates him in the fellowship and joint participation of the covenant. *Turret. Vol.* 2. *p.* 203.

covenant unto men; and of theſe antecedent conditions, there are likewiſe two ſorts which muſt be carefully diſtinguiſhed.

1. Such antecedent conditions which have the force of a meritorious and impulſive cauſe, which being performed by the proper ſtrength of nature, or, at moſt, by the help of common, aſſiſting grace, do give a man a right to the reward or bleſſings of the covenant. And in this ſenſe we utterly diſclaim antecedent conditions, as I plainly told you, p. 61. of my *Vindiciae, &c.* Or,

2. An antecedent condition ſignifying no more than an act of ours, which, though it be neither perfect in every degree, nor in the leaſt meritorious of the benefit conferred, nor performed in our natural ſtrength; yet, according to the conſtitution of the covenant, is required of us, in order to the bleſſings conſequent thereupon, by virtue of the promiſe: And, conſequently, the benefits and mercies granted in the promiſe, in this order, are, and muſt be ſuſpended by the donor or diſpoſer of them, until it be performed. Such a condition we affirm faith to be. But here again, faith, in this ſenſe, the condition of the new covenant is conſidered;

1. Eſſentially; or,

2. Organically, and inſtrumentally.

In the firſt conſideration of faith, according to its eſſence, it is contained under obedience, and in that reſpect we exclude it from juſtifying our perſons, or entitling us to the ſaving mercies of the new covenant, as it is a work of ours; and ſo I excluded it, p. 133. of my *Method of Grace*, which you ignorantly or wilfully miſtake, when, in your reply, p. 88, 89. you object againſt me: Faith, conſidered in this ſenſe, is not the condition of the covenant, nor can pretend to be ſo, more than any other grace. But,

We conſider it organically, relatively, and (as moſt ſpeak) inſtrumentally, as it receives Chriſt, John i. 12. and ſo gives us power to become the ſons of God; it being impoſſible for any man to partake of the ſaving benefits of the covenant, but as he is united to Chriſt. "For all the promiſes of God are in him "yea, and in him amen," 2 Cor. i. 20. And united to Chriſt no man can be, before he be a believer; for Chriſt dwelleth in our hearts by faith, Eph. iii. 17. Upon which ſcriptural grounds and reaſons it is, that we affirm faith to be an antecedent condition, or *cauſa ſine qua non*, to the ſaving benefits of the new covenant; and that it muſt go before them, at leaſt in order of nature, which is that we mean, when we ſay faith is

the antecedent condition of the new covenant. And those that deny it to be so, (as the Antinomians do, who talk of actual and personal justification from eternity, or at least from the death of Christ), must consequently assert the actual justification of *infidels*; and not only disturb, but destroy the whole order of the gospel, and open the sluices and flood-gates to all manner of licentiousness.

And thus our pious and learned divines generally affirm faith to be the condition of the covenant. So * Mr. Jeremiah Burroughs, 'Faith (saith he) hath the honour above all other 'graces, to be the condition of the second covenant; therefore 'it is certainly some great matter that faith enables us to do. 'Whatsoever keeps covenant with God, brings strength, tho' 'itself be never so weak: as Sampson's hair. What is weaker 'than a little hair? yet, because the keeping that, was keeping 'covenant with God; therefore even a little hair was so great 'strength to Sampson. Faith then, that is the condition of the 'covenant, in which all grace and mercy is contained, if it be 'kept, it will cause strength indeed to do great things.'

And as this excellent man, Mr. Burroughs, is in this sense for the conditionality of the new covenant, so are the most learned and eminent of our own divines. Dr. Edward Reynolds †, assigning the differences betwixt the two covenants, gives this for one: 'They differ in the condition (saith he); 'there legal obedience, here only faith; and the certain conse-'quent thereof, repentance. There is difference likewise in 'the manner of performing these conditions: For now God 'himself begins first to work upon us, and in us, before we 'move or stir towards him. He doth not only command us, 'and leave us to our created strength to obey the command; 'but he furnisheth us with his own grace and Spirit to obey 'the command.'

Of the same judgment is Dr. Owen ‡: 'Are we able (saith 'he) of ourselves to fulfil the condition of the new covenant? 'Is it not as easy for a man by his own strength to fulfil the 'whole law, as to repent and believe the promise of the 'gospel? This then is one main difference of these two cove-'nants, That the Lord did in the Old only require the con-'dition; now in the New, he also effects it in all the foede-

* Moses's Self denial, p. 288.

† Dr. Reynolds, his Life of Christ, p. 512.

‡ Dr. Owen's Treatise of Redemption, book 3. chap. 1. p. 103, 104. And in his Tract of justification, p. 299, *&c.*

'rates, to whom the covenant is extended.' This is the mal you pretended to be againſt conditions.

Mr. William Pemble *, opening the nature of the two covenants, ſaith, 'The law offers life unto man upon condition of 'perfect obedience; the gospel offers life unto man upon another condition, to wit, of repentance and faith in Chriſt.' And after his proofs for it, ſaith, 'From whence we conclude 'firmly, That the difference between the law and the goſpel, 'aſſigned by our divines, is moſt certain and agreeable to the 'ſcriptures, *viz.* That the law gives life unto the juſt, upon 'condition of perfect obedience in all things; the goſpel gives 'life unto ſinners, upon condition they repent, and believe in 'Chriſt Jeſus.'

Learned and judicious Mr. William Perkins † thus, 'The 'covenant of grace is that, whereby God freely promiſing Chriſt 'and his benefits, exacts again of man, that he would by faith 'receive Chriſt. And again, in the covenant of grace two 'things muſt be conſidered, the ſubſtance thereof, and the con-'dition. The ſubſtance of the covenant is, That righteouſ-'neſs and life everlaſting, is given to God's church and people 'by Chriſt ‡. The condition is, That we, for our part, are by 'faith to receive the foreſaid benefits; and this condition is by 'grace, as well as the ſubſtance.'

That learned, humble, and painful miniſter of Chriſt, Mr. John Ball §, ſtating the difference betwixt the two covenants, ſhews, that in the covenant at Sinai, in the covenant with Abraham, and that with David, that in all theſe covenant-expreſſures, there are for ſubſtance the ſame evangelical conditions of faith and ſincerity.

Dr. Davenant ‖ thus: 'In the covenant of the goſpel it is 'otherwiſe; for in this covenant, to the obtainment of reconci-'liation, juſtification, and life eternal, there is no other con-'dition required than of true and lively faith, John iii. 16. 'Therefore juſtification, and the right to eternal life, doth de-'pend on the condition of faith alone.'

Dr. Downame ** harmonizeth with the reſt in theſe words:

* Pemble of juſtification, ſect. 4 chap. 1. p. 214, 215, 216, 217.

† Perkins order of cauſes, chap. 31. p. 17.

‡ Reformed Catholic of juſtification, p. 570.

§ Mr. J. Ball of the covenant of grace, ch. 1. Of the new covenant. p. 198.

‖ *Davenant de juſtific.* Act. cap. 30.

** Tract. 1. of juſtification, b. 6. chap. 8. ſect. 10. and b. 7. chap. 2. ſect 6.

'That which is the only condition of the covenant of grace, 'by that alone we are justified: But faith is the condition of 'the covenant of grace, which is therefore called *lex fidei*. 'Our writers (saith he) distinguishing the two covenants of God, 'that is, the law and the gospel, whereof one is the covenant 'of works, the other the covenant of grace, do teach, That 'the law of works is that which to justification requireth works 'as the condition thereof: the law of faith that, which to justification requireth faith as the condition thereof. The former saith this, *Do this, and thou shalt live*; the latter, *Believe in Christ, and thou shalt be saved.*'

But what stand I upon particular, though renowned names? You may see a whole constellation of our sound and famous divines in the assembly, thus expressing themselves about this point. 'The grace of God (say they) is manifested in the 'second covenant, in that he freely provideth, and offereth to 'sinners a Mediator, and life and salvation by him, and requiring faith as the condition to interest them in him, promiseth 'and giveth his Holy Spirit to all his elect, to work in them 'that faith, with all other saving graces, and to enable them 'to all holy obedience, as the evidence of the truth of their 'faith,' *&c.* *.

I could even tire the reader with the testimonies of eminent foreign divines, as *Cameron, de triplici foedere*, Thes. 82. *Ursinus et Paraeus, explicatio Catech.* Quest. 18. *de foedere. Wendeline, Christian Theology, lib. 1. cap. 19. thes. 9. Poliander, Rivet, Wallaeus, and Thysius*, the four learned professors at Leyden, Synopf. Dis. 23. sect. 27. *&c.* And as for those antient and modern divines, whom the Antinomians have corrupted and misrepresented, the reader may see them all vindicated, and their concurrence with those I have named, evidenced, by that learned and pious Mr. John Craile, in his *Modest vindication of the doctrine of conditions in the covenant of grace*, from p. 58. onward; a man whose name and memory is precious with me, not only upon the account of that excellent sermon he preached, and those fervent prayers he poured out many years since, at my ordination; but for that learned and judicious treatise of his against Mr. Eyre, wherein he hath cast great light upon this controversy, as excellent Mr. Baxter and Mr. Woodbridge have also done. But, alas! what evidence is sufficient to satisfy ignorant and obstinate men!

Sir, It pities me to see the lamentable confusion you are in;

* Larger catechis. *4to. London*, 1648. p. 81.

you are forced, by the evidence of truth, to yield and own the ſubſtance of what I contend for: you have yielded the covenant to be conſequently conditional, in p. 84. of your Reply; you have alſo as plainly yielded that the *application of pardoning mercy unto our ſouls, is in order of nature, conſequent unto believing*, p. 31. of your Reply. From both which conceſſions, in your own words recited, this concluſion is evident and unavoidable, *viz.*

That no adult perſon, notwithſtanding God's eternal election, and Chriſt's meritorious death and ſatisfaction, according to the conſtitution and order of the new covenant, can either be juſtified in this world, or ſaved in the world to come, unleſs he firſt believe.

For if the application of pardoning mercy unto our ſouls is in order of nature, conſequent unto believing, (as you truly affirm it to be) then, according to the conſtitution and order of the new covenant, no application of pardoning mercy can be made to our ſouls before we believe. And if it be evident (as you ſay it is, p. 84.) *that unto a full and complete enjoyment of all the promiſes of the covenant, faith on our part is required*; then, as no man can be actually juſtified in this world, ſo neither can he be ſaved before, or without faith, in the world to come. And if you did but ſee the true ſuſpending nature of faith, which you plainly yield, in theſe two conceſſions; you would quickly grant the conditional nature of it: for what is the proper nature and true notion of a condition, but to ſuſpend the benefits and grants of that covenant, in which it is ſo inſerted? And thus the controverſy betwixt us is fairly iſſued. But I doubt you underſtand not what you have here written, or are troubled with a very bad memory; becauſe I find you in a far different note from this, in p. 103. of your Reply, where you ſay, 'That if Jeſus Chriſt fulfilled the law, and purchaſed 'heaven and happineſs for men, (as all true Proteſtants hitherto 'have taught) then nothing can remain, but to declare this 'to them, to incline them to believe, and accept it; and to pre'ſcribe in what way, and by what means they ſhall finally come 'to inherit eternal life. To affirm, therefore, that faith and 'repentance, are the conditions of the new covenant required 'of us, in point of duty, antecedent to the benefit of the pro'miſe, doth neceſſarily ſuppoſe, that Chriſt hath not done all 'for us, nor purchaſed a right to life for any; but only made 'way that they may have it upon certain terms, or (as ſome 'ſay) he hath merited, that we might merit: but the conditi'ons of the covenant are not to be performed by the head and

'members both, Gal. iv. 4. Christ, therefore, having, in our 'stead, performed the conditions of life, there remains nothing 'but a promise, and the obedience of children, as the fruit and 'effect thereof to them that believe in him, together with means 'of obtaining the full possession, which here we want.'

Reply. Either these passages I have here cited and compared, were fetched at a great distance of time, out of authors differing as much in judgment as you and I do, and so the dissonancy of them is the mere effect of oblivion, and incogitancy; or else your intellectuals are more confused, and weak, than I am willing to suspect them to be. For if the application of pardoning mercy to our souls, is, in order of nature, consequent to believing (as you truly say it was) then, certainly, notwithstanding Christ's fulfilling the law, and purchasing heaven and happiness for men, something else must remain to be done, besides declaring this to them, to incline them to believe and accept it, or prescribing to them in what way they shall finally come to inherit eternal life. For, besides those declarations, and prescriptions you talk of, faith itself must be wrought in the souls of men, or else pardoning mercy is not, in order of nature, consequent unto believing, as you said it was: for all the external declarations, and prescriptions, in the world, are not faith itself, but only the means to beget it; which may, or may not become effectual to that end.

Secondly, Whereas you say, this (senseless notion) is consequent upon the doctrine of all true Protestants; you grossly abuse them, and make all the true Protestants in the world guilty of worse than Arminian, or Antinomian dotage. The Antinomian, indeed, makes our actual justification to be nothing else but the manifestation, or declaration of our justification from eternity, or the time of Christ's death. And the Arminian tells us, that the declaration of the gospel to men, is sufficient to bring them to faith, by the assisting grace of the Spirit. But your notion is worse than the very dregs of both, and yet you tack it as a just consequent to the doctrine of all true Protestants.

Reply, Thirdly, You say, *That to affirm faith, and repentance, to be the conditions of the new covenant required of us, in point of duty, antecedent to the benefit of the promise, doth necessarily suppose that Christ hath not done all for us, nor purchased a right to life for any; but only made way that they may have it upon certain terms, or merited, that we might merit.* Here, sir, you vilely abuse all those worthy P. 104.

divines before-mentioned, who have made faith the condition of the new covenant, pinning upon them both Popery and Judaism. Popery, yea, the dregs of Popery, in supposing their doctrine necessarily implies that *Christ hath merited that we might merit.* And Judaism to the height, in saying, *their doctrine necessarily supposes that Christ hath not purchased a right of life to any.* What can a Jew say more? Ah, Mr. C. can you read the words I have recited out of blessed Burroughs, Owen, Pemble, Perkins, Davenant, Downame, yea, the whole assembly of reverend and holy divines, with multitudes more (who have all, with one mouth, asserted faith to be the condition of the new covenant required on man's part, in point of duty; and that men must believe before they can be justified; which is the very same thing with what I say, that it is an antecedent to the benefit of the promise) and not tremble to think of the direful charges you here draw against them? The Lord forgive your rash presumption.

Fourthly, Whereas you say, Christ hath, in our stead, performed the conditions of life, and that there remains nothing but a promise, *&c.* you therein speak in the highest dialect of * Antinomianism; hath not Christ, by his life, and death, performed the conditions of life, in our stead? Yet you yourself confess, that pardoning mercy is in order of nature, consequent to our believing; certainly, then, there is something more to be done beside the mere making, or being of a promise: there must be the effects of the promise in our hearts, yea, the effects of those absolute promises of the first grace, Ezek. xxxvi. Jer. xxxii. Or else, notwithstanding Christ's performance of redemption on his part, we can neither be justified nor saved. For I do not think you intend to lay the condition of repentance, or believing, upon Christ, who, in the new covenant, hath laid them upon us, though, in the same covenant, he graciously undertakes to work them in us; and yet your words sound in that wild Antinomian note.

Objection. But, I suppose, you take my notion to be as self-repugnant as your own, when I say faith is an antecedent condition to justification; because I also say, this grace is also supernaturally wrought in us, and is not of ourselves. This staggers you, and is the very stone you stumble at all along this controversy: for in your sense, p. 34. every condition is meritorious, by condignity, or congruity.

Reply. First, What do I say more, in all this, than what those

* Saltmarsh of free grace, p. 126, 127.

worthies, before-mentioned, do expreſly affirm? Doth not Dr. Owen (the man whom you deſervedly value) make conditions, both in Adam's covenant and the new, with this difference, that Adam's covenant required them, but the new covenant effects them in all the foederates? Sir, We take it for no contradiction to aſſert, That the planting of the principle, and the aſſiſting and exciting of the acts of faith, are the proper works of the Spirit of God, and are, alſo, contained in the abſolute promiſes of the new covenant, Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27. Jer. xxxii. 39, 40. And yet faith, notwithſtanding this, is truly and properly our work and duty; and that upon our believing, or not believing, we have, or have not, an actual intereſt in Chriſt, righteouſneſs, and life. For though the author of faith be the Spirit of God, yet believing is properly our act, and an act required of us by a plain command; 1 John iii. 23. *This is the command of God, That ye believe.* And if its being wrought in God's ſtrength makes it ceaſe to be our work, I would fain know what expoſition you would give of that place, Phil. ii. 12, 13. *Work out your own ſalvation,* &c. *for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do.* And as this faith is truly and properly our work, though wrought in God's ſtrength (for it is not God, but we that do believe) ſo it is wrought in us by him (by your own confeſſion) before the application of pardoning mercy, which is conſequent, in order of nature, thereunto: and therefore hath the true nature of an antecedent condition, which is that I contend for; and did you but underſtand your own words, you would not contend againſt it.

Object. 2. Oh, but ſay you, p. 34. every condition is meritorious, either by way of *congruity*, or *condignity*.

Reply. This is your ignorance of the nature of a condition, with which I find you as unacquainted, as with the nature of a covenant. A condition, whilſt unperformed, only ſuſpends the act of the law, or teſtament; it being the will of the *teſtator, legiſlator*, or *donor*, that his law, or teſtament, ſhould act, or effect, when the condition is performed, and not before: But it is not eſſential to a condition, to be a meritorious, or impulſive cauſe, moving him to beſtow the benefit for the ſake thereof. A man freely gives another, out of his love and bounty, ſuch an eſtate, or ſum of money, which he ſhall enjoy, if he live to ſuch a year, or day, and not before; is this *quando dies veniet*, this appointed time the meritorious, or impulſive cauſe of the gift? Surely no man will ſay it; but that it is a *cauſa ſine qua non*, or a condition ſuſpending the enjoyment of

the gift, no man will deny, that knows what the nature of a condition is.' An act meritorious, by way of *congruity*, is that to which a reward is not due, out of ſtrict juſtice, but out of decency, or ſome kind of meetneſs. Merit of *condignity* is a voluntary action, for which a reward is due to a man, out of juſtice, and cannot be denied him, without injuſtice; our faith is truly the condition of the new covenant, and yet we detest the meritorioufneſs of it, in either ſenſe.

Object. 3. But you object my words to me, in my *Method of Grace*, where I aſſert the impoſſibility of believing without the efficacy of ſupernatural grace, p. 102, 103.

Reply. Sir, I own the words you quote, and am bold to challenge the moſt envious eye that ſhall read thoſe lines, to ſhew me the leaſt repugnancy betwixt what I ſaid there, and what I have ſaid in my *Vindiciæ Legis, &c.* p. 9. of the *Prolegomena*, and p. 61. of that book. You ſhew your good-will to make an advantageous thruſt, but your weapon is too ſhort, and can draw no blood. But leaving theſe weak and impertinent cavils, let us come to your ſolution of my arguments, p. 98. by which I proved the conditionality of the new covenant. My firſt argument was this:

Argum. 1. If we cannot be juſtified, or ſaved, till we believe, and are juſtified when we believe; then faith is the condition on which thoſe conſequent benefits are ſuſpended, *&c.*

Anſwer. The ſum of your anſwer (without denying, diſtinguiſhing, or limiting one propoſition) is this, That, 'here faith 'is properly put into the room of perfect obedience, and is to 'do what perfect obedience was to do under the law: Where'as (ſay you) faith is only appointed as an inſtrument to re'ceive and apply the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, which is the alone 'matter of our juſtification before God; and faith itſelf is not 'our righteouſneſs, as it would be if it were a condition,' p. 105, 106.

Reply. Not to note the weakneſs and impertinence of this anſwer, I ſhall only take notice of what you here allow, and grant, That *faith is appointed as an inſtrument to receive, and apply the righteouſneſs of Chriſt, which is the alone matter of our juſtification before God.* Whence I infer three concluſions.

Firſt, That we cannot be juſtified before God till we believe, except you can prove, that the unaccepted and unapplied righteouſneſs of Chriſt, doth actually juſtify our perſons before God.

Secondly, That the juſtification of our perſons before God, is, and muſt be ſuſpended (as by a non-performed condition)

until we actually believe. Which two concluſions yield up your cauſe to my argument, which you here ſeem to oppoſe.

Thirdly, That hereby you perfectly renounce, and deſtroy your Antinomian fancy before-mentioned, That *if Chriſt have fulfilled the law, and purchaſed heaven for men, nothing can remain but to declare this to them, &c.* for it ſeems by this, they muſt receive, and apply Chriſt's righteouſneſs by faith, or they cannot be juſtified (you ſay not declaratively in their own conſciences, but) before God. And thus, inſtead of anſwering, you have confirmed, and yielded my firſt argument, and only oppoſe your own miſtakes, not the ſenſe, or force of my arguments, in all that you ſay to it, or the ſcriptures produced to prove it.

Argum. 2. To my ſecond argument, recited p. 94. where I argued from God's covenant with Abraham, and proved it to be conditional; and yet by you acknowledged to be a pure goſpel covenant: all that you ſay, is, That you have diſpatched that before, in your diſcourſe about the *covenant of circumciſion*, and therefore will ſay nothing to it here.

Reply. In ſaying nothing to it here, you have ſaid as much as you did before, in the place you refer to; and therefore finding nothing ſaid here, or there, I conclude you can ſay nothing to it at all.

Argum. 3. My third *argument* was this: if all the promiſes of the goſpel be abſolute and unconditional, then they do not properly belong to the new covenant. That cannot properly and ſtrictly be a covenant, which is not a mutual compact, and in which there is no reſtipulation, nor re-obligation: it is a naked promiſe, not a covenant.

To this you anſwer three things. In the firſt branch of your anſwer, you impudently beg the queſtion, by ſaying, That *you have proved already, in your replies to my former arguments, that the new covenant is wholly free and abſolute.* Upon this abſurd *Petitio principii*, you make bold to invert my argument thus, in your ſecond reply: 'If all the promiſes of the goſpel be wholly abſolute and unconditional, they do properly and truly belong to the new covenant; but ſo they are: therefore, *&c.*' O rare diſputant! In the laſt place, in oppoſition to the ſequel of my major propoſition, you tell me, You will oppoſe the judgment of Dr. Owen on Heb. viii. 10. where he ſaith, 'That a covenant properly is a compact, or agreement, on certain terms, ſtipulated by two or more parties, *&c.* and that the word διαθηκη, there uſed, ſignifies a covenant improperly,' *&c.* *Anſwer*, p. 113, 114.

Reply. If you call this an oppoſition to the ſequel of my *major*, either your brains or mine do want Hellebore. Doth he not ſay the very ſame thing I do, That there muſt be a reſtipulation in a proper covenant? And, as for the word Διαθηκη, which, he ſaith, ſignifieth a covenant improperly, but properly is a teſtamentary diſpoſition, I fully concur with him therein; but I hope a teſtamentary diſpoſition may have a condition in it; to be ſure ſuch a one as I aſſert faith here to be, which is the free gift of God: and in this ſenſe I ſhewed you before, where the *Doctor* yields faith to be the condition of the new covenant.

Argum. 4. My fourth argument was this, If all the promiſes of the new covenant be abſolute and unconditional, and have no reſpect nor relation to any grace wrought in us, or duty done by us; then the trial of our intereſt in Chriſt by marks and ſigns of grace, is not our duty, nor can we take comfort in ſanctification, as it is an evidence of our juſtification, *&c.*

Your anſwer, p. 120. is, That 'at this rate I may prove 'quidlibet a quolibet: for it doth not follow, that, becauſe the 'new covenant is abſolute, therefore it hath no reſpect, nor re-'lation, to any grace wrought in us, nor duty done by us, or 'that we may not juſtly take comfort in ſanctification, as an e-'vidence of our juſtification.'

Reply. If I had a mind to learn the art of proving *quidlibet a quodlibet*, and make myſelf ridiculous to others, by ſuch fooliſh attempts, I know no book in the world fitter to inſtruct me therein than yours. Certainly you have the knack of it, and gave us an inſtance of it but now, in confuting the ſequel of my *major*, by an allegation out of Dr. Owen, which expreſly confirms and eſtabliſhes it. But to the point; I would willingly know how it is poſſible for ſanctification to be a true and certain mark and ſign of juſtification, when (according to the Antinomian principle, which you here too much comprobate and eſpouſe) a man may be juſtified before he believe, yea, before he is a man, even from the time of Chriſt's death, and (as others of them ſpeak) from eternity. A true mark and ſign muſt be proper to, and inſeparable from that which it ſignifies. Now, if that be true which you ſaid before, That *after Chriſt's fulfilling of the law in his own perſon*, &c. *nothing can remain, but to declare this to men to incline them to believe and accept it, and to preſcribe in what way they ſhall come to inherit eternal life.* If this be all that can remain to us, then nothing but the declarations, and preſcriptions of the goſpel, which are things without us, can remain to be marks and ſigns of juſtification to us: and

conſequently all thoſe to whom thoſe declarations and preſcriptions are made and given, have therein the marks and evidences of their juſtification. But I am truly weary of ſuch ſtuff, I am ſure the apoſtle places *vocation* before *juſtification*. Rom. viii. 30. "Whom he called, them he juſtified." And without an immediate teſtimony from heaven, I know not how to evidence and prove my juſtification, but from, and by my faith, and other parts of ſanctification; whereby I apprehend and applied the righteouſneſs of Chriſt: if you can prove it from the declarations, and preſcriptions of the goſpel, I cannot.

Argum. 5. My fifth and laſt argument, ran thus: if the covenant of grace be altogether abſolute, and unconditional, requiring nothing to be done on our part, to entitle us to its benefits; then it cannot be man's duty, in entering covenant with God, to deliberate the terms, count the coſt, or give his conſent by word or writing, to the terms of this covenant: for where there are no terms at all (as in abſolute promiſes there are none) there can be none to deliberate. But I ſhewed you, this is man's duty, from clear and undeniable ſcriptures, *&c.*

You ſay, by way of anſwer hereunto, that 'You muſt tell me, that the ſcriptures do make a 'plain diſtinction betwixt the new and everlaſting 'covenant, which God hath been pleaſed to make with ſinners in 'Jeſus Chriſt; and the return of that ſincere and dutiful obe-'dience which he requires of us, by way of anſwer thereunto. '(2.) You ſay, there are many things, which though promiſed 'in the covenant, and wrought in us by the grace of God; 'are yet duties indiſpenſably required of us in order to the par-'ticipation of the full end of the covenant in glory: and in re-'ſpect hereof, we are indeed to deliberate the terms, count 'the coſt, and give up ourſelves ſolemnly to him, with ſincere 'reſolutions, *&c.* But then you thought I had underſtood 'there had been a vaſt difference betwixt God's covenant with 'us, and our covenant with God, citing Ezek. xvi. 59, 60, 61. 'where God promiſeth to "give them their ſiſters for daugh-'ters, but not by their covenant." And with this you com-'pare Pſal. lxxxix. "My covenant will I not break;" where '(you ſay) we find a plain diſtinction betwixt God's covenant 'with them, and their duty to God. And laſtly, you ſay, p. '105. that the want of a due obſervation of this plain ſcripture-'diſtinction, betwixt God's free and abſolute covenant made 'with ſinners in Chriſt, and our covenants with God by way of 'return thereunto, is the true reaſon of all our miſtakes about 'the true nature of the goſpel covenant, whilſt we jumble and

Anſwer, p. 122, 123.

'confound together that which the ſcriptures do ſo plainly diſtinguiſh.'

Reply. To your firſt anſwer, I ſay; it is true, the ſcriptures do diſtinguiſh betwixt covenant and covenant; that of works, and that of grace. It alſo diſtinguiſhes the ſame covenant of grace for ſubſtance, according to its various adminiſtrations into the old and new covenant. It alſo diſtinguiſhes betwixt the *promiſſory* part of the ſame covenant of grace, and the *reſtipulatory* part; not as of two oppoſite covenants, (as you diſtinguiſh them, Gen. xvii.) but as the juſt and neceſſary parts of one and the ſame covenant. It alſo diſtinguiſhes betwixt vows made by men to God in ſome particular caſes, and the covenant of grace betwixt God and them. But what's all this to your purpoſe? Or in what point doth it touch my argument? You deſire me to caſt mine eye upon Ezek. xvi. and Pſal. lxxxix. I have done ſo, and that impartially; and do aſſure you, I admire why you produce them againſt my argument. That in Ezek. ſpeaks of the enlargement of the church by the acceſſion of the Gentiles to it; and the ſenſe of thoſe words ſeems to me to be this; That this enlargement of the church is a gracious addition, or ſomething beyond what God had ever done in his former diſpenſations of the covenant to that people. And for Pſal. lxxxix. I know not what you mean to produce it for, unleſs it be to prove, what I never denied, That notwithſtanding our failures in duty towards God, God will ſtill keep his covenant with us; though he will viſit the iniquities of his covenant-people with a rod.

To your ſecond anſwer, That we are to deliberate the terms and count the coſt, with reſpect to thoſe duties, which are in order to the participation of the full end of the covenant in glory: by which I ſuppoſe you mean ſelf-denial, perſeverance, *&c.* I have no controverſy with you about that. Our queſtion is, Whether there be no deliberations required of, or to be performed by men who are not yet in Chriſt by juſtifying faith, but under ſome preparatory works towards faith? And whether at the very time of their cloſing with Chriſt, there be not a conſent of the will unto thoſe terms required of them? If you ſay there be (as by the places I alledged it evidently appears there are) then you yield the point I contend for. If you ſay they are not before, or at the time of believing, to conſider any terms, or give their conſent to them by word or writing; ſuch an anſwer would fly in the very face of thoſe ſcriptures I produced: for then a man may be in covenant without his own conſent; he that deliberates not,

conſents not; *non conſentit, qui non ſentit.* And therefore you durſt not ſpeak it out (for which modeſty I commend you) and ſo leave me with half an anſwer, not touching that part, *viz.* Antecedent deliberations, which were concerned in this argument. And now let your moſt partial friends judge, whether from this performance of yours, you have any juſt ground for that vain boaſt which concludes your anſwer, *viz.* 'That the 'covenants themſelves, which thoſe privileges are bottomed on; 'are now repealed, and that there is no room left for any o-'ther argument to infer the baptiſm of infants:' at leaſt, I ſhall willingly commit it to the judgment of all intelligent and impartial readers, Whether Mr. Cary hath any real ground in this performance of his, for ſuch a thraſonical concluſion, ſuch a vain and fulſome boaſt?

I find that with like confidence he hath alſo attempted a reply to Mr. Joſeph Whiſton, a reverend, learned, and aged divine, who hath accurately, and ſucceſsfully defended God's covenant with Abraham, againſt Mr. Cox, and doubt not, if Mr. Cary, and his party, have but confidence enough to expoſe it to the public view, and to adventure the cauſe of infant-baptiſm upon it, the world would quickly ſee an end of this long-continued and unhappy controverſy, which hath vexed the church of God, and alienated the affections of good men; and that the wiſdom of providence hath permitted and overruled this laſt attempt, to the ſingular advantage of the truths of God, and tranquility of good men, whoſe concernment (at this time eſpecially) is rather to ſtrengthen their faith, and heighten their encouragements from God's gracious covenant, than to undermine it, when all things beſide it are ſhaking and tottering round about them.

And now, Sir, for a *coronis* to all thoſe things that have been controverted betwixt us about the covenants of God, and the right of believers infants to baptiſm, reſulting from one of them, which I have aſſerted, and argued, againſt you in my firſt anſwer, and you have ſilently and wholly paſſed over in your reply, hoping to deſtroy them all at once, by proving God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. to be a pure Adam's covenant of works; I judge it neceſſary, as matters now lie between us, to give the reader the grounds and reaſons of my faith and practice with reſpect unto the ordinance of infant baptiſm, and that as ſuccinctly and clearly as I can, in the following *Theſes*; which being laid together by an unprejudiced and conſiderative reader, will, I think, amount to more than a ſtrong probability, That

it is the will of God, that the infant ſeed of believers ought now to be baptized.

But here I muſt remind the reader, and beg him
P. 61, 62. to review what I have ſaid before in the third *Cauſe of Errors*, That to arrive to ſatisfaction in this point, requires a due and ſerious ſearch of the whole word of God; with a ſedate, rational, and impartial mind; comparing one thing with another, though they lie ſcattered at a diſtance in the ſcriptures; ſome in the *Old Teſtament* and ſome in the *New*. Bring but theſe things to an interview, as we do in diſcovering the change of the ſabbath, and we may arrive unto a due ſatisfaction of the will of God herein. This I confeſs, calls for ſtrength of mind, great ſedulity, attention, and impartiality; and yet what man would think all this too much, if it were but to clear his children's title unto a ſmall earthly inheritance? I intend not to give the reader here an account of all the arguments drawn from ſeveral ſcripture topics by the ſtrenuous defenders of infants baptiſm; but to keep only to the arguments drawn from God's covenant with Abraham, Gen. xvii. which is the ſcripture mainly controverted betwixt us: You affirming boldly and dangerouſly, that covenant to be no other than an Adam's covenant of works; and I juſtly denying and abhorring your poſition upon the grounds and reaſons before given, which you neither have, nor ever will be able to deſtroy. Now that the reader, who hath neither time nor ability to read the larger, and more elaborate treatiſes on this ſubject may *ἰδεῖν τυπῳ* in one ſhort view, ſee the deduction of believers infants right to baptiſm from this goſpel covenant of God with Abraham, I ſhall gather the ſubſtance of what I contend for, and lay it as clearly as I can before the eyes of my reader in the following *Theſes*; which being diſtinctly conſidered as to the evident truth of each, and then rationally compared one with the other, he will ſee how each fortifies other, and how all together do ſtrongly confirm this concluſion, That the infants of believers under the goſpel, as they naturally deſcend from Abraham's ſpiritual ſeed, are therefore partakers at leaſt of the external privileges of the viſible church, and therefore ought now to be baptized.

Theſis 1. *It hath pleaſed God, in all ages of the world, ſince man was created, to deal with his church and people, by way of covenant, and in the ſame way he will ſtill deal with them unto the end the world.*

God might have dealt with us in a ſupreme way of mere ſovereignty and dominion, commanding what duties he pleaſed,

and eſtabliſhing his commands by what penalties he had pleaſed, and never have brought himſelf under the tye and obligation of a covenant to his own creatures: but he chuſes to deal familiarly with his people, by way of covenanting, being a familiar way, 2 Sam. vii. 19. *Is this the manner of men*, O Lord God, or, (as Junius renders it) *and that after the manner of men, O Lord God!* it is a way full of condeſcending grace and goodneſs: he is willing hereby his people ſhould know what they may certainly expect from their God, as well as what their God requires of them. Hereby alſo he will furniſh them with mighty pleas and arguments in prayer, ſuccour their faith againſt temptations; ſtrengthen their hands in duties of obedience, ſweeten their obedience to them, and diſcriminate his own people from the world.

As ſoon therefore as man was created and placed in paradiſe, being made upright, and throughly furniſhed with abilities perfectly and completely to obey all the commands of his Maker, the Lord immediately entered into the covenant of works with him, and all his natural poſterity in him: And in this covenant his ſtanding or falling was according to the perfection and conſtancy of his perſonal obedience, Gen. ii. 17. Gal. iii. 10. But in this firſt covenant of works no proviſion at all was made for his recovery (in caſe of the leaſt failure) by his repentence or better obedience; but the curſe immediately ſeized both ſoul and body: and ſin, by the fall entering into man's nature, totally diſabled him to the perfect performance of any one duty, as that covenant required it to be done, Rom. viii. 3. nor would God accept any repentance, or after-endeavours, in lieu of that perfect obedience due by law. So that from the fall of Adam, to the end of the world, this covenant ceaſeth as a covenant of life, or a covenant able to give righteouſneſs and life unto all mankind for evermore, Rom. iii. 20. "Therefore by the deeds "of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight." Gal. ii. 16. "By the works of the law ſhall no fleſh be juſtified." Gal. iii. 11. "But that no man is juſtified by the law in the ſight "of God, is evident." And it being ſo evident, that righteouſneſs and life being for ever impoſſible to be obtained upon the terms of Adam's covenant, it muſt therefore be a ſelf-evident truth, That *ſince the fall, God never did, and to the end of the world he never will open that way or door to life (thus block'd up by an abſolute impoſſibility) for the juſtification and ſalvation of any man.*

Theſis 2. *Soon after the violation and ceſſation of this firſt*

covenant, as a covenant of life, it pleased the Lord to open and publish the second covenant of grace by Jesus Christ, the first dawning whereof we find in Gen. iii. 15. *where the seed is promised which shall bruise the serpent's head.* And though this be but a very short, and somewhat obscure discovery of man's remedy and salvation by Christ; yet was it a joyful sound to the ears of God's people, it was even life from the dead to the believers of those times. For we may rationally conclude, That that space of time betwixt the breaking of the first, and making of the second covenant, was the most dismal period of time that ever the world did, or shall see. This covenant of grace now took place of the covenant of works, comprehended all believers in the bosom of it. The covenant of works took place from the time it was made until the fall of Adam, and then was abolished as a life-giving covenant. The second covenant took place from the time it was made soon after the fall, and is to continue to the end of the world. And these only are the two covenants God hath made with men; the latter succeeding the former, and commencing from its expiration; but both cannot possibly be in force together at the same time, and upon the same persons, as co-ordinate covenants of life and salvation. For in co-ordination they expel and destroy each other, Gal. v. 4. "Whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from "grace." The first covenant was a covenant without a mediator; the second is a covenant with a mediator. Place a believer under both at once, or put these two covenants in co-ordination, and that which results will be a pure contradiction, *viz.* That a man is saved without a mediator, and yet by a mediator. Moreover, if there be a way to life without a mediator, there was no need to make a covenant in and with a mediator; nor can those words of Christ be true, John iv. 6. "I "am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the "Father but by me."

The righteousness of the first covenant was within man himself; the righteousness of the second covenant is without man in Christ. Put these two in co-ordination, and that which results is as pure a contradiction as the former, *viz.* That a man is justified by a righteousness within him, and yet is justified by a righteousness without him, expressly contrary to the apostle's conclusion, Rom. iii. 20. "Therefore by the deeds "of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight." It is therefore an intolerable absurdity to place believers under both these covenants at the same time; under the curse of the first, and blessing of the second. For whensoever the state of any

perſon is changed by juſtification, his covenant is changed with his ſtate, Col. i. 13. 'Tis as unimaginable that a believer ſhould thus ſtand under both covenants, as it is to imagine a man may be born of two mothers, Gal. iv. 22, 23, 24, 25. or a woman lawfully married to two huſbands, Rom. vii. 1, 2, 3, 4. and more abſurd (if it be poſſible any thing can be more abſurd) to attribute the moſt glorious privilege of the covenant of grace, (*viz.* "I will be a God to thee, and to thy ſeed after thee," Gen. xvii. 7.) to the impotent and aboliſhed covenant of works; both which abſurdities are aſſerted in defence of *Antipaedo-baptiſm.*

And though it be true, that after the firſt edition of the covenant of grace, the matter of the firſt covenant was repreſented to the Iſraelites in the moral law: yet that repreſentation was intended and deſigned to be ſubſervient, and added to the promiſe, Gal. iii. 19. and ſo (as an acute and learned divine * ſpeaks) the very decalogue or *moral law* itſelf pertained to the covenant of grace; yea, in ſome ſort, flowed out of this covenant, as it was promulged by the counſel of God to be ſerviceable to it; both antecedently to lead men by the conviction of ſin, fear of wrath, and ſelf-deſpair, to the covenant of grace; and alſo conſequently as it is a pattern of obedience and rule of holineſs. For had it been publiſhed as a covenant deſigned intentionally to its primitive uſe and end, it had totally fruſtrated the covenant of grace.

Theſis 3. *Though the primordial light or firſt glimmerings of this covenant of grace, were comparatively weak and obſcure; yet from the firſt publication of it to Adam, God in all ages hath been amplifying the privileges, and heightning the glory of this ſecond covenant in all the after expreſſures and editions of it unto this day, and will more and more amplify and illuſtrate it to the end of the world.*

That firſt promiſe, Gen. iii. 15. is like the firſt ſmall ſpring or head of a great river, which the farther it runs, the bigger it grows by the acceſſion of more waters to it. Or like the ſun in the heavens, which the higher it mounts, the more bright and glorious the day ſtill grows.

In that period of time, betwixt Adam, and Abraham, we find no token of God's covenant ordered therein to be applied to the infant-ſeed of believers. But in that ſecond edition of the covenant to Abraham, the privileges of the covenant were amplified, and his infant-ſeed not only taken into the covenant

* *Turretini Pars 2da loc.* 12. *p.* 248.

(as they were before) but also added to the visible church, by receiving the token of the covenant, which then was circumcision; and so here is a great addition made to the visible church, even the whole infant off-spring of adult believers.

From that period, until the coming of the Messiah in the flesh, the Jewish church, and their infant-seed, except only some few proselytes out of the Gentile nations, made up the visible church of God, and the poor Gentiles were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world, Eph. ii. 12. but in this glorious third period the covenant again enlarges itself more than before, and the privileges of it are no longer limited, and restrained to the Jewish believers, and their infant-seed; but the Gentiles also are taken into the covenant, and the door of faith was opened unto them, Acts xiv. 27. the partition-wall was now broken down, which separated the church from the Gentile world, Eph. ii. 14. This was a glorious enlargement of the covenant, and many glorious prophecies, and promises, were fulfilled in it; such as those, Isa. xl. 10, and xlii. 1, 6. xlix. 22. liv. 3. lx. 3, 5, 11, 16. lxii. 2, *&c.*

And though the covenant, as to its external part, seems to have lost ground in the breaking off of the Jewish nation from the church; yet, like the sea, what it loses in one place, it gains with advantage, upon another: The addition of many Gentile nations to the church, more than recompences for the present breaking off of that one nation of the Jews. And, indeed, they are broken off but for a time, for God shall graff them in again, Rom. xi. 23. This therefore being the design of God, and steady course of his covenant of grace, more and more to enlarge itself in all ages; nothing can be more opposite to the nature of this covenant, than to narrow and contract its privileges in its farther progress, and cut off a whole species from it, which it formerly took in.

Thesis 4. It is past all doubt, and contradiction, that the infant-seed of Abraham, under the second edition of the covenant of grace, were taken with their believing parents into God's gracious covenant, had the seal of that covenant applied to them, and were thereby added to the visible church, Gen. xvii. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. which was a gracious privilege of the covenant superadded to all the former, and such as sweeps away all the frivolous, and groundless cavils, and exceptions of those that object the incapacity of infants to enter into covenant with God, or receive benefit from the external privileges of the vi-

ble church. Nor can the ſubtileſt enemy to infants baptiſm, give us a convincing reaſon why the infants of Gentile believers are not equally capable of the ſame benefits that the infants of Jewiſh believers were, if they ſtill ſtand under the ſame covenant that the former ſtood under; and God hath no where revealed the gracious grant formerly made to the infant-ſeed of his covenant-people.

Theſis 5. It is to me clear, beyond all contradiction, from Rom. xi. 17. "If ſome of the branches be broken off, and "thou being a wild olive-tree, wert grafted in amongſt them, "and with them partakeſt of the root and fatneſs of the olive-"tree?" I ſay, I can ſcarce deſire a clearer ſcripture-light than this text gives, to ſatisfy my underſtanding in this caſe, that when God brake off the unbelieving Jews from the church, both parents and children together; the believing Gentiles, which are as truly Abraham's ſeed as they were, Gal. iii. 29. yea, the more excellent ſeed of Abraham, were implanted or ingrafted in their room, and do as amply enjoy the privileges of that covenant, both internal and external, for themſelves, and for their infant-ſeed, as ever any members of the Jewiſh church did or could do.

Our adverſaries in this controverſy do pitifully and apparently ſhuffle here, and invent many ſtrange and unintelligible diſtinctions to be-cloud the light of this famous text. What they are, and how they are baffled, the reader will eaſily diſcern from what hath already paſt betwixt my antagoniſt and me, in p. 108, *&c.* of my *Vindiciæ Legis et Fœderis*. It is plain, that Abraham is the root, the olive-tree, the viſible church; the ſap and fatneſs of the olive, are church-ordinances and covenant-privileges, the Gentile believers, who are Abraham's ſeed according to promiſe, are the ingrafted branches ſtanding in the place of the natural branches, and with them, or in like manner as they did, partaking of the root and fatneſs of the olive-tree, that is, as really and amply enjoying all the immunities, benefits, and privileges of the church and covenant (amongſt which the initiating ſign was one, and a chief one too) as ever the natural branches that were broken off, that is the Jewiſh parents and their children, did or might have done. And to deny this (as before was noted) is to ſtraiten covenant-privileges in their farther progreſs.

Theſis 6. Suitably hereunto we find, that no ſooner was the Chriſtian church conſtituted, and the believing Gentiles by faith added to it, but the children of ſuch believing parents are declared to be foederally holy, 1 Cor. vii. 14. and the unbeliev-

ing Jews, who were ſuperſtitiouſly fond of circumciſion, and prejudiced againſt baptiſm, as an injurious innovation, are by the apoſtle perſuaded to ſubmit themſelves to it, Acts ii. 38, 39, aſſuring them that the ſame promiſe, *viz. I will be a God to thee, and to thy ſeed after thee*, is now as effectually ſealed to them and their children by baptiſm, as it was in the former age by circumciſion: And that the Gentiles, which are yet afar off, whenever God ſhall call them, ſhall equally enjoy the ſame privilege, both for themſelves and for their children alſo.

We alſo find a commiſſion given by Chriſt to the diſciples, Mat. xxviii. 19, 20. *To diſciple all nations, babtizing them, &c.* from which diſcipleſhip, infants ought not to be excluded, Acts xv. 10. Yea, we find, that as at the inſtitution of circumciſion, Abraham, the father and maſter of the family, was firſt circumciſed in his own perſon, and then his whole houſhold, Gen. xvii, 23, 24. anſwerably as ſoon as any perſon by converſion, or public profeſſion of faith become a viſible child of Abraham, that perſon was firſt baptized, and the whole houſhold with him or her, Acts xvi. 15, 33. It is unreaſonable to put us upon the proof, that there were infants in theſe houſes; it being more than probable that in ſuch frequent baptizing of houſholds belonging to believers, there were ſome infants; but if there were none, 'tis enough for us to prove from their foederal holineſs, 1 Cor. vii. 14. And the extent of God's promiſes to them, Acts ii. 38, 39. if there had never been ſo many infants in thoſe houſholds, they might and ought to have been baptized. How the true ſenſe and ſcope of the two laſt mentioned ſcriptures are maintained and vindicated againſt Mr. Cary's corrupt gloſſes and interpretations, ſee my *Vindiciae Legis et Foederis*, p. 90, 91. We do not lay the ſtreſs of infants baptiſm upon ſuch ſtrictures as the baptizings of the houſholds of believers, or Chriſt's taking up in his arms, and bleſſing the little ones that were brought to him. Theſe and many other ſuch things found in the hiſtory of *Chriſt*, and *Acts of the apoſtles*, have their uſe and ſervice to fortify that doctrine. But if we can produce no example of any believer's infant baptized, the merit of the cauſe lies not in the matter of fact, but covenant-right. For our adverſaries themſelves, if we go to matter of fact, will be hard put to it to produce us one inſtance out of the *New Teſtament* of any child of a believing Chriſtian whoſe baptiſm was deferred, or by Chriſt or his apoſtles ordered to be deferred, until he attained the years of maturity, and made a perſonal profeſſion of faith himſelf.

Theſis 7. *The change of the token and ſeal of the covenant from*

circumciſion to baptiſm, will by no means infer the change or diverſity of the covenants, eſpecially when the latter comes into the place, and ſerves to the ſame uſe and end with the former, as it is manifeſt baptiſm doth, from Col. ii. 11. 12. *as hath been, I think, ſufficiently argued againſt* Mr. Cary's *gloſſes and exceptions*, pag. 100, 101. *of my* Vindiciae Legis et Foederis. The covenant is ſtill the ſame *covenant of grace*, though the external initiating ſign be changed. For what is the ſubſtantial part of the covenant of grace now, but the ſame it was to Abraham and his ſeed before? Is not this our *covenant of grace*, Heb. viii. 10. "I will be to "them a God, and they ſhall be to me a people?" And in what words was Abraham's covenant expreſſed, Gen. xvii. 7. "I will "eſtabliſh my covenant between me and thee, and thy ſeed "after thee in their generations for an everlaſting covenant, to "be a God unto thee, and to thy ſeed after thee." This makes Abraham's covenant, ſealed to him and his ſeed, as truly and properly the *covenant of grace*, as that which baptiſm now ſeals to believers and their ſeed. The raſh ignorance of thoſe that affirm, God may become a people's God in the way of a ſpecial intereſt, by virtue of the broken and aboliſhed *covenant of works*, rather deſerves ſharp reprehenſion, and ſad lamentation, than a confutation; which, nevertheleſs out of reſpect to my friend Mr. Cary, I have given it in its proper place in this rejoinder.

I hope by this time I have made it evident, that the defenders of infants baptiſm, as it is eſtabliſhed upon God's covenant with Abraham, Gen xvii. have not ſo miſtaken their ground, as Mr. Cary hath, by his endeavours to carry that covenant, as an Adam's *covenant of works*, through ſuch a multitude of other errors and abſurdities, as he draws along with it in his way of reaſoning.

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A POSTSCRIPT to Mr. Cary.

SIR,

I Reſolved not to diſturb my mind with your paſſionate provoking language, at leaſt whilſt I was buſily employed in ſearching for reaſon and argument, (two ſcarce commodities) amongſt heaps of vain and fulſome words: Nor will I now imitate your folly and rudeneſs, leſt I become an *offender*, whilſt I am to act the part of a *reprover*. When I read your title, *A juſt*

and ſober reply, and preſently fell in among rude inſults, ſilly evaſions, and ſuch inartificial diſcourſes as follow, in your book, I began to challenge you in my thoughts for matching ſuch bad ſtuff with ſo fair and lovely a title: But a ſecond thought quickly corrected the former; for I conſidered, no man living could juſtly forbid the marriage betwixt your book and its title, ſince there is not the leaſt kindred, or relation, between them.

Had your anſwers been juſt, you would have obſerved the rules of a reſpondent, which you have not done; and if they had been ſober, you had never been ſo free in your reproaches, and ſparing in your arguments, as you have been. Is this the man, of whom it is ſaid, in the Epiſtle to his *Solemn Call*, That *his lines are free from reflection and reproach, towards thoſe of the perſuaſion he contends with?* Is this my old friendly neighbour? It calls to my mind the Italian proverb, *God keep us from our friends, and we will do what we can to keep ourſelves from our enemies.* And though you act the part of an enemy, you ſhall be my friend, whether you will or not. If you will be my friend out of love, I will make you ſo by a good improvement of your hatred.

I have been muſing with myſelf, what might be the true cauſe of all your rage againſt my book; one while I thought it proceeded from want of diſcretion, that you were not able to diſtinguiſh betwixt an adverſary in a controverſy, and an adverſary to the perſon; but thought every blow that was given to your error, muſt needs be a mortal wound to your reputation. But, Sir, how cloſe, and ſmart ſoever my diſcourſes againſt your errors be, I am ſure they are more full of civility, and reſpect to you, than ſuch a reply as you have made deſerves: And if, in expoſing your errors, your reputation be expoſed, you muſt blame them for occaſioning it, and not me.

Sometimes I thought it an effect of your policy, that when followed cloſe, and hard put to it, you endeavoured an eſcape this way. Camero, ſpeaking of this kind of ſubtilty in his adverſaries, ſaith, *Faciunt quod quarundam ferarum ingenium eſt, ut faetore et graveolentia, defectae jam viribus, ac fractae, venatorem abigunt.* Some cunning animals, as foxes, *&c.* when purſued at the heels, drive away both dogs and huntſmen with their intolerable ſtench. And Hierom, long ago, told Helvidius, his adverſary, *Arbitror te veritate convictum, ad maladicta converti;* being vanquiſhed by truth, he betook himſelf to ill language. After the ſame manner you act here, being no longer able to defend yourſelf by ſolid and ſober ratiocination, you truſt to your

faculty in crimination; bad cauſes only drive men into ſuch refuges.

In a word, I am ſatisfied that nothing but your extravagant zeal for your idolized opinion, could have thrown you into ſuch diſingenuous methods, and artifices, as theſe. The Epheſians were quiet enough, till their Diana began to totter. Your paſſionate outcries ſignify to me, ſomething is touched to the quick, which you are more fondly in love with than you ought. When one told Luther what hideous outcries his enemies made againſt him, and how they reviled him in their books; *I know by their roaring* (ſaith he) *that I have hit them right.*

You tell me, in your reply, p. 24. That you perceive *I have a mighty itch to find out your abſurdities.* I wiſh, Sir, you were no more troubled with the itch after them, than I am after the diſcovery of them. Had I affected ſuch employments, I could eaſily have gathered three to one out of your book, more than I did; and have repreſented thoſe I gathered, much more odiouſly (and yet juſtly) than I did: but friendſhip conſtrained me to handle them (becauſe yours) as gently as I could.

I might have juſtly charged you from what you ſay, p. 174, 175. of your Solemn Call, where you place all the believers on earth, without exception of any, under the covenant of works, as a miniſtration of death and condemnation, and the ſevereſt penalties of a dreadful curſe: I might thereupon have juſtly charged you for preſenting to the world ſuch a monſtrous ſight as was never ſeen before, ſince the creation, *viz.* a whole church of condemned and curſed believers. This I might as well have charged upon your poſition, and done it no wrong.

I could tell you, from what you ſay, p. 76. of your reply, *That God doth indeed, in the covenant of works, make over himſelf to ſinners, to be their God in a way of ſpecial intereſt; but it being upon ſuch hard terms, that it is utterly impoſſible, that way, to attain unto life,* &c. I could juſtly have told you, that theſe paſſages of yours drop pure nonſenſe upon the readers underſtanding; as if ſalvation were impoſſible to be attained by the ſame covenant, wherein God becomes our God, and makes over himſelf by way of ſpecial intereſt to us.

Had I had an itch to expoſe the burleſque, and ridiculous ſtuff which lies obvious enough in your book, I ſhould then have told your reader, That according to your doctrine, how oppoſite and inconſiſtent ſoever the two covenants of works and grace are, yet the ſame ſubjects, *viz.* believers, may, at

once, not only ſtand under them both, but that the ſame common ſeal, *viz.* circumciſion, equally ratifies, and confirms them both: For you allow, in your Call, p. 205. *That it ſealed the covenant of grace to believing Abraham, and yet was a ſeal of the covenant of works*, yea, the very condition of that covenant, as you frequently affirm it to be. *Vide* p. 81. of your Reply, and Paſſim.

I could as eaſily and juſtly have told you, That the moſt malicious Papiſt could ſcarcely have invented a more horrid reproach againſt our famous orthodox Proteſtant divines, than you (I dare not ſay maliciouſly, but) ignorantly have done; when you charge ſuch men, as Mr. Francis Roberts, Mr. Obadiah Sedgwick, and, indeed, all that aſſert the law, complexly taken, to be an obſcurer covenant of grace; that they compriſe perfect doing with the conſequent curſe for non-performance, and believing in Chriſt unto life and ſalvation, in one and the ſame covenant: This is an intolerable abuſe of yours, p. 5 of your Reply. They generally aſſert the law, in that complex ſenſe and latitude you take it, to be a true covenant of grace, though more obſcurely adminiſtred; and that the diſtinction of the covenants into old and new, is no parallel diſtinction with that of works and grace, or Chriſt's and Adam's covenant. Your public recantation of the injury you have done the very Proteſtant cauſe herein, is your unqueſtionable duty, yet ſcarce a due reparation of the injury.

In a word, I cannot but look upon it as a diſcovery of your great weakneſs, That when you meet with ſuch a difficulty as poſes your underſtanding, and you cannot poſſibly reconcile with your notion; as that of Paul's circumciſing Timothy, and you affirming that the very act of circumciſion did, in its own nature, oblige all, on whom it paſſed, to the perfect obſervation of the law for righteouſneſs, you will rather chuſe to leave the bleſſed *apoſtle* in a contradiction to his own doctrine, than to your vain notion: For what do you ſay, p. 95. of your Reply? *That however the caſe ſtood, in that reſpect, this is certain, &c.* It alſo argues weakneſs in you, to inſiſt upon, aggravate, jeer, and reproach at that rate you do, p. 38. of your Reply, for the miſtake, and miſplacing of one figure, *viz.* Gen. xii. for Gen. xvii. as if the merit of the whole cauſe depended on it. The like I may ſay of your charging me with nonſenſe, for putting Gen. xvii. 7, 8. for Gen. xvii. 9, 10. when yet yourſelf, p. 205. of your Call, tell us, That circumciſion was appointed as a ſign, or token of the covenant, Gen. xvii. 7, 8, 9. What pitiful trifles are theſe, to raiſe ſuch a

mighty triumph upon? When Dureus accuſed our famous Whitaker for one or two trivial, verbal miſtakes, Whitaker returned him the ſame anſwer I ſhall give you, *Bene habet, hic in rebus non vertuntur fortunæ eccleſiæ;* It is well the caſe of the church depends not upon ſuch trifles.

For a concluſion; I do ſeriouſly warn all men to beware of receiving doctrines ſo deſtructive to the great truths of the goſpel as theſe are. And I do ſolemnly profeſs I have not deſignedly ſtrained them, to caſt reproach upon him that publiſhed them; but the matters are ſo plain, that if Mr. Cary will maintain his poſitions, not only myſelf, but every intelligent reader, will be eaſily able to faſten all theſe odious conſequents upon him, after all his apologies.

Sir, in a word, I dare not ſay, but you are a good man; but ſince I read your two books, you have made me think, more than once, of what one ſaid of Jonah after he had read his hiſtory, that he was a ſtrange man of a good man: Yet as ſtrange a good man as you are, I hope to meet you with a ſounder head, and better ſpirit in heaven.

The Second APPENDIX: Giving a brief Account of the Riſe and Growth of ANTINOMIANISM; the Deduction of the principal Errors of that Sect: With modeſt and ſeaſonable reflections upon them.

THE deſign of the following ſheets, caſt in as a *Mantiſſa* to the foregoing diſcourſe of *Errors*, is principally to diſcharge, and free the free grace of God from thoſe dangerous errors, which fight againſt it under its own colours; partly to prevent the ſeduction of ſome that ſtagger; and, laſtly, (though leaſt of all) to vindicate my own doctrine, the ſcope and current whereof, hath always been, and ſhall ever be, to exalt the free grace of God in Chriſt, to draw the vileſt of ſinners to him, and relieve the diſtreſſed conſciences of ſin-burthened Chriſtians.

But, notwithſtanding my utmoſt care and caution, ſome have been apt to cenſure it, as if in ſome things it had a tang of Antinomianiſm: But if my public, or private diſcourſes, be the faithful meſſengers of my judgment and heart, (as I hope they are) nothing can be found in any of them caſting a friendly aſpect upon any of their principles, which I here juſtly cenſure, as erroneous.

Three things I principally aim at in this short *Appendix*.

1. To give the reader the moſt probable riſe of Antinomianiſm.
2. An account of the principal errors of that ſect.
3. To confirm and eſtabliſh Chriſtians againſt them, by ſound reaſons, back'd with ſcripture-authority. And,

I. *Of the riſe of Antinomianiſm.*

The ſcriptures foreſeeing there would ariſe ſuch a ſort of men in the church, as would wax wanton againſt Chriſt, and turn his grace into laſciviouſneſs; hath not only precautioned us in general, to beware of ſuch opinions as corrupt the doctrine of free grace. Rom. vi. 1, 2. "Shall we continue in ſin, that grace "may abound? God forbid:" But hath particularly indigitated, and marked thoſe very opinions, by which it would be abuſed, and made abundant proviſion againſt them; as namely,

1. All ſlighting and vilifying opinions or expreſſions of the holy law of God, Rom. vii. 7, 12.

2. All opinions and principles, inclining men to a careleſs diſregard and neglect of the duties of obedience, under pretence of free grace, and liberty by Chriſt, James ii. Matth. xxv.

3. All opinions neglecting or ſlighting ſanctification, as the evidence of our juſtification, and rendering it needleſs, or ſinful to try the ſtate of our ſouls, by the graces of the Spirit wrought in us, which is the principal ſcope of the firſt epiſtle of John.

Notwithſtanding, ſuch is the wickedneſs of ſome, and weakneſs of others, that in all ages, (eſpecially the laſt paſt, and preſent), men have audaciouſly broken in upon the doctrine of free grace, and notoriouſly violated and corrupted it, to the great reproach of Chriſt, ſcandal of the world, and hardening of the enemies of reformation. 'Behold, (ſaith Contzen the 'Jeſuit, on Matth. xxiv.) the fruit of Proteſtantiſm, and their 'goſpel-preaching.'

Nothing is more oppoſite to looſeneſs, than the free grace of God, which teaches us, *That denying all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly and godly in this preſent world.* Nor can it without manifeſt violence, be made pliable to ſuch wicked purpoſes; and therefore the apoſtle tells us, Jude 4. that this is done by turning the grace of our God into laſciviouſneſs; μεταθεντες, transferring it, *ſcil foeda interpretatione*, by a corrupt, abuſive interpretation, to ſuch uſes and purpoſes as it abhors. No ſuch wanton, licentious concluſions can be inferred from the goſpel-doctrines of grace and li-

berty, but by wresting them against their true scope and intent, by the wicked arts and practices of deceivers upon them.

The gospel makes sin more odious than the law did, and discovers the punishment of it in a more severe and dreadful manner, than ever it was discovered before. Heb. ii. 2, 3. "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every "transgression and disobedience, received a just recompence of "reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvati-"on?" It shews our obligations to duty to be stronger than ever, and our encouragements to holiness greater than ever, 2 Cor. vii. 1. and yet corrupt nature will be still tempting men to corrupt and abuse it. The more luscious the food is, the more men are apt to surfeit upon it.

This prevention and abuse of free grace, and Christian liberty, is justly chargeable (though upon different accounts) both upon wicked and good men. Wicked men corrupt it designedly, that by entitling God to their sins, they might sin the more quietly, and securely. So the devil instigated the Heathens to sin against the light, and law of nature, by representing their Gods to them as drunken, and lascivious deities. So the Nicolaitans, and school of Simon, and after them the Gnostics, and other Heretics in the very dawning of gospel-light and liberty, began presently to loose the bond of restraint from their lusts, under pretence of grace and liberty. The * Etiani blushed not to teach, *That sin, and perseverance in sin, could hurt the salvation of none, so that they would embrace their principles.*

How vile and abominable inferences the Manichaeans, Valentinians, and Cerdonites drew from the grace and liberty of the gospel, in the following ages, I had rather mourn over, than recite; and if we come down to the *fifteenth century*, we shall find the Libertines of those days as deeply drenched in this sin, as most that went before them. † Calvin mournfully observes, That under pretence of Christian liberty, they trampled all godliness under foot; the vile courses their loose opinions soon carried them into, plainly discovered for what intents and purposes they were projected and calculated: and he that reads the preface to that grave and learned Mr. Thomas Gataker's book, intituled, *God's eye upon Israel*, will find, That some Antinomians, of our days, are not much behind the worst and vilest of them. One of them cries out, *Away with the law,*

* *August. de. Hæres. Tom. 6. Hæres.* 54.
† *Calv. adversus Libert. c.* 8.

away with the law, it cuts off a man's legs, and then bids him walk. Another ſaith, *It is as poſſible for Chriſt himſelf to ſin, as for a child of God to ſin. That if a man, by the Spirit, know himſelf to be in the ſtate of grace, though he be drunk, or commit murder, God ſees no ſin in him:* With much more of the ſame bran, which I will not tranſcribe.

But others there are, whoſe judgments are unhappily tainted, and leavened with thoſe looſe doctrines; yet being, in the main, godly perſons, they dare not take liberty to ſin, or live in the neglect of known duties, though their principles too much incline that way; but though they dare not, others will, who imbibe corrupt notions from them; and the renowned piety of the authors will be no antidote againſt the danger, but make the poiſon operate the more powerfully, by receiving it in ſuch a vehicle. Now it is highly probable, ſuch men as theſe might be charmed into ſuch dangerous opinions, upon ſuch accounts as theſe:

1. It is like ſome of them might have felt in themſelves the anguiſh of a perplexed conſcience under ſin, and not being able to live with theſe terrors of the law, and diſmal fears of conſcience, might too haſtily ſnatch at thoſe doctrines which promiſe them relief and eaſe, as I noted before in the fifth *Cauſe* of my *Treatiſe of Errors.* And that this is not a gueſs at random, will appear from the very title page of Mr. Saltmarſh's book of free grace, where (as an inducement to the reader to ſwallow his Antinomian doctrine) he ſhews him this curious bait.

It is (ſaith he) *an experiment of Jeſus Chriſt upon one who hath been in the bondage of a troubled conſcience, at times, for the ſpace of about twelve years, till now upon a clearer diſcovery of Jeſus Chriſt in the goſpel, &c.*

2. Others have been induced to eſpouſe theſe opinions from the exceſs of their zeal againſt the errors of the Papiſts, who have notoriouſly corrupted the doctrine of juſtification by free grace; decried *imputent*, and exalted *inherent* righteouſneſs above it. The Papiſts have deſignedly, and induſtriouſly ſealed up the ſcriptures from the people, leſt they ſhould there diſcover thoſe ſovereign, and effectual remedies, which God hath provided for their diſtreſſed conſciences, in the riches of his own grace, and the meritorious death of Chriſt; and ſo all their *maſſes, pilgrimages, auricular confeſſions*, with all their dear *indulgences*, ſhould lie upon their hands as ſtale and cheap commodities. *Oh*, (ſaid Stephen Gardiner) *let not this gap of free grace be opened to the people.*

But as ſoon as the light of reformation had diſcovered the

free grace of God to ſinners, (which is, indeed, the only effectual remedy of diſtreſſed conſciences) and by the ſame light the horrid cheats of the man of ſin were diſcovered; all good men, who were enlightened by the reformation, juſtly and deeply abhorred Popery, as the enemy of the grace of God, and true peace of conſcience, and fixed themſelves upon the ſound and comfortable doctrines of juſtification by faith thro' the alone righteouſneſs of Chriſt. Mean while, thankfully acknowledging, that they which believe, ought alſo to maintain good works. But others there were, tranſported by an indiſcreet zeal, who have almoſt bended the grace of God as far too much the other way, and have both ſpoken and written many things very unbecoming the grace of God, and tending to looſeneſs and neglect of duty.

3. It is manifeſt, that others of them have been ingulphed, and ſucked into thoſe dangerous quickſands of Antinomian errors, by ſeparating the ſpirit from the written word; if once a man pretend the ſpirit without the ſcriptures to be his rule, whither will not his own deluding fancies carry him, under a vain and ſinful pretence of the Spirit?

In the year 1528, when Helſar, Traier, and Seekler, were confuted by Hallerus; and their errors about oaths, magiſtrates, and paedo-baptiſm, were detected by him, and by Colveus at Bern, that which they had to ſay for themſelves, was, That *the Spirit taught them otherwiſe than the letters of the Scriptures ſpeak.* So dangerous it is to ſeparate what God hath conjoined, and father our own fancies upon the holy Spirit.

4. And it is not unlike, but a comparative weakneſs, and injudiciouſneſs of mind, meeting with a fervent zeal for Chriſt, and his glory, may induce others to eſpouſe ſuch taking, and plauſible, though pernicious doctrines; they are not aware of the dangerous conſequents of the opinions they embrace, and what looſeneſs may be occaſioned by them: I ſpeak not of occaſions taken, but given, by ſuch opinions and expreſſions; a good man will draw excellent inferences of duty from the very ſame doctrine. Inſtance that of the ſhortneſs of time, from whence the apoſtle infers abſtinence, ſtrictneſs, and diligence, 1 Cor. vii. 29. but the Epicure infers all manner of diſſolute, and licentious practices. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we ſhall die," 1 Cor. xv. 22. The beſt doctrines are this way liable to abuſe.

But let all good men beware of ſuch opinions and expreſſions, as give an handle to wicked men to abuſe the grace of God,

which haply the author himself dare not do, and may through hope others may not do: but if the principal will yield it, it is in vain to think corrupt nature will not catch at it, and make a vile use, and dangerous improvement of it.

For example, If such a principle as this be asserted for a truth before the world, *That men need not fear that any, or all the sins they commit, shall do them any hurt;* let the author, or any man in the world, warn, and caution readers (as the Antinomian author of that expression hath done) not to abuse this doctrine, it is to no purpose: the doctrine itself is full of dangerous consequents, and wicked men have the best skill to infer and draw them forth, to cherish and countenance their lusts; that which the author might design for the relief of the distressed, quickly turns itself into poison, in the bowels of the wicked; nor can we excuse it, by saying any gospel truth may be thus abused; for this is one of that number, but a principle that gives offence to the godly, and encouragement to the ungodly. And so much as to the rise and occasion of Antinomian *errors.*

2. In the next place, let us view some of the chief doctrines commonly called Antinomian, amongst which there will be found a Πρωτον ψευδος, the radical and most prolific error, from which most of the rest are spawned, and procreated.

Error 1. I shall begin with the dangerous mistake of the Antinomians in the doctrine of *justification.* The article of justification is deservedly stiled, by our divines, *Articulus stantis, vel cadentis religionis,* the very pillar of the Christian religion.

In two things, however, I must do the Antinomians right: (1.) In acknowledging, that though their errors, about justification, be great and dangerous, yet they are not so much about the substance, as about the mode of a sinner's justification; an error far inferior to that of the Papists, who depress the righteousness of Christ, and exalt their own inherent righteousness in the business of justification. (2.) I am bound, in charity, to believe, that some, among them, do hold those errors but speculatively, whilst the truth lies nearer their hearts, and will not suffer them to reduce their own opinions into practice. Now as to their errors about justification, the most that I have read do make *Justification to be an immanent and eternal act of God; and do affirm, the elect were justified before themselves or the world had a being.* Others come lower, and affirm, *The elect were justified at the time of Christ's death.* With these Dr. Crisp harmonizes.

Error 1.

Error 2. That justification by faith is no more but a manifestation to us of what was really done before we had a being. Hence Mr. Saltmarsh thus defines faith, *It is*, saith he, *a being perswaded more or less of Christ's love to us*; so that when we believe, that which was hid before doth then appear; *God* (saith another,) *cannot charge one sin upon that man who believes this truth, That God laid his iniquities upon Christ.*

Error 3. That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or question, Whether they believe, or no: Nay, That we ought no more to question our faith, than to question Christ. *Saltm. of Free Grace*, p. 92, 95.

Error 4. That believers are not bound to confess sin, mourn for it, or pray for the forgiveness of it; because it was pardoned before it was committed; and pardoned sin, is no sin. See Eaton's *Honeycomb*, p. 446, 447.

Error 5. They say, That God sees no sin in believers, whatsoever sins they commit. Some of them, as Mr. Town, and Mr. Eaton, speak out and tell us, That God can see no adultery, no lying, no blasphemy, no cozening in believers; for though believers do fall into such enormities, yet all their sins being pardoned from eternity, they are no sins in them. Town's *Assertions*, p. 96, 97, 98. Eaton's *Honeycomb*, chap. 7. p. 136, 137. with others of a more pernicious character than they.

Error 6. That God is not angry with the elect, nor doth he smite them for their sins; and to say that he doth so, is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God. This is avouched generally in all their writings.

Error 7. They tell us, That by God's laying our iniquities upon Christ, he became as completely sinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Christ. *Vide Dr. Crisp*, p. 270.

Error 8. Upon the same ground it is, that they affirm, That believers need not fear either their own sins, or the sins of others; for that neither their own, nor any other mens sins can do them any hurt, nor must they do any duty for their own salvation.

Error 9. They will not allow the new covenant to be made properly with us, but with Christ for us; and that this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition on our part. They do not absolutely deny that faith, repentance and obedience are conditions in the new covenant; but say, They are not conditions on our part, but Christ's; and that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us. *Saltmarsh of Free-grace*, p. 126, 127.

Error 10. They ſpeak very ſlightingly of trying ourſelves by marks and ſigns of grace. Saltmarſh often calls it a weak, low, carnal way; but the New-England Antinomians, or Libertines, call it a fundamental error, to make ſanctification an evidence of juſtification; that it is to light a candle to the ſun; that it darkens our juſtification; and that the darker our ſanctification is, the brighter our juſtification is. *See their book entitled, Riſe, Reign, Error.* p. 72.

In this breviate, or ſummary account of Antinomian doctrines, I have only ſingled out, and touched ſome of their principal miſtakes and errors, into which ſome of them run much farther than others. But I look upon ſuch doctrines to be in themſelves of a very dangerous nature, and the malignity and contagion would certainly ſpread much farther into the world than it doth, had not God provided two powerful antidotes to reſiſt the malignity, *viz.*

1. The ſcope and current of ſcripture.
2. The experience and practice of the ſaints.

(1.) Theſe doctrines run croſs to the ſcope and current of the ſcriptures, which conſtantly ſpeak of all unregenerate perſons (without exception of the very elect themſelves, during that ſtate) as children of wrath, even as others, without Chriſt, and under condemnation.

They frequently diſcover God's anger, and tell us his caſtigatory rods of affliction are laid upon them for their ſins.

They repreſent ſin as the greateſt evil; moſt oppoſite to the glory of God, and good of the ſaints; and are therefore filled with cautions and threatenings to prevent their ſinning.

They call the ſaints frequently and earneſtly, not only to mourn for their ſins before the Lord; but to pray for the pardon and remiſſion of them in the blood of Chriſt.

They give us a far different account of ſaving faith, and do not place it in a perſuaſion more or leſs of Chriſt's love to us, or a manifeſtation in our conſciences of the actual remiſſion of our ſins before we had a being; but in our receiving Chriſt, as the goſpel offers him, for righteouſneſs and life.

They frequently call the people of God to the examination and trial of their intereſt in Chriſt by marks and ſigns: and accordingly furniſh them with variety of ſuch marks from the divers parts or branches of ſanctification in themſelves.

They earneſtly, and every where, preſs believers to ſtrictneſs and conſtancy in the duties of religion, as the way wherein God would have them to walk. They infer duties from privileges; and therefore the Antinomian dialect is a wild note,

which the generality of serious Christians do easily distinguish from the scripture-style and language.

(2.) The experience and practice of the saints recorded in scripture, as well as our contemporaries, or those whose lives are recorded for our imitation, do greatly secure us from the spreading malignity of Antinomianism. Converse with the living, or read the histories of dead saints, and you shall find, that, in their addresses to God, they still bless and praise him, for that great and wonderful change of state which was made upon them when they first believed in Christ, and on their believing passed from death to life; freely acknowledging before God, they were before their conversion, equal in sin and misery with the vilest wretches in the world: they heartily mourn for their daily sins, fear nothing more than sin, no afflictions in the world go so near their hearts, as sin doth: they can mourn for the hardness of their hearts, that they can mourn no more for sin. They acknowledge the rods of God, that are upon them, are not only the evidences of his displeasure against them for their sins; but the fruits of their uneven walking with him; and that the greatest of their afflictions is less than the least of their iniquities deserve. They fall at their Father's feet, as oft as they fall into sin, humbly and earnestly suing for pardon thro' the blood of Christ. They are not only sensible that God sees sin in them, but that he seeth such and so great evils in them, as makes them admire at his patience, that they are not consumed in their iniquities. They find cause enough to suspect their own sincerity, doubt the truth of their faith, and of their graces; and are therefore frequent and serious in the trial and examination of their own states, by scripture marks and signs. They urge the commands and threatenings, as well as the promises, upon their own hearts, to promote sanctification; excite themselves to duty and watchfulness against sin; they also encourage themselves by the rewards of obedience, knowing their labour is not in vain in the Lord: and all this while they look not for that in themselves, which is only to be found in Christ; nor for that in the law, which is only to be found in the gospel; nor for that on earth, which is only to be found in heaven: this is the way that they take. And he that shall tell them their sins can do them no hurt, or their duties do them no good, speaks to them, not only as a Barbarian, in a language they understand not, but in such a language as their souls detest and abhor.

Moreover, the zeal and love of Christ and his glory, being kindled in their souls, they have no patience to hear

such doctrines as so greatly derogate from his glory, under a pretence of honouring and exalting him: it wounds and grieves their very hearts to see the world hardened in their prejudices against reformation, and a gap opened to all licentiousness.

But, notwithstanding this double antidote and security, we find, by daily experience, such doctrines too much obtaining in the professing world. For my own part, he that searches my heart and reins, is witness, I would rather chuse to have my right-hand wither, and my tongue rot within my mouth, than to speak one word, or write one line, to cloud or diminish the free grace of God. Let it arise, and shine in its meridian glory. None owes more to it, or expects more from it, than I do; and what I shall write in this controversy, is to vindicate it from those doctrines and opinions, which, under pretence of exalting it, do really militate against it. To begin therefore with the first and leading error.

Error I. *That the justification of sinners is an immanent and eternal act of God, not only preceeding all acts of sin, but the very existence of the sinner himself, and so perfectly abolishing sin in our persons, that we are as clean from sin as Christ himself,* ἀναμαρτήτους, as some of them have spoken. To stop the progress of this error, I shall,

1. Lay down the sentence of the orthodox about it.

2. Offer some reasons for the refutation of it.

(1.) That which I take to be the truth agreed upon, and asserted by sound and reformed divines, touching gospel justification, is by them made clear to the world, in these following scriptural distinctions of it.

Justification may be considered under a twofold respect or habitude.

1. According to God's eternal decree; or,

2. According to the executions thereof in time.

1. According to God's eternal decree and purpose; and in this respect grace is said to be "given us in Christ before the "world began," 2 Tim. i. 19. and we are said to be "predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ," Eph. i. 5.

2. According to the execution thereof in time, so they again distinguish it, by considering it two ways:

1. In its impetration by Christ.

2. In its application to us.

That very mercy or privilege of justification, which God, from all eternity, purely out of his benevolent love, purposed and decreed for his elect, was also in time purchased for them

of the death of Christ, Rom. v. 9, 10. where we are said to be "justified by his blood;" and he is said to have "made peace "through the blood of his cross, to reconcile all things to him-"self," Col. i. 20. to be "delivered for our offences, and raised "again for our justification," Rom. iv. 25. Once more, "That "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not "imputing their trespasses," 2 Cor. v. 19. God the Father had, in the death of Christ, a foundation of reconciliation, whereby he became propitious to his elect, that he might absolve and justify them. Again,

2. It must be considered in its application to us, which application is made in this life at the time of our effectual calling. When an elect sinner is united to Christ by faith, and so passeth from death to life, from a state of condemnation into a state of absolution and favour; this is our actual justification, Rom. v. 1. Acts xiii. 39. John v. 24. which actual justification is again considered two ways:

1. Universally and in general, as to the state of the person.

2. Specially and particularly, as to the acts of sin.

As soon as we are received into communion with Christ, and his righteousness is imputed by God, and received by faith, immediately we pass from a state of death and condemnation to a state of life and justification, and all sins already committed, are remitted without exception or revocation; and not only so, but a remedy is given us in the righteousness of Christ, against sins to come: and though these special and particular sins we afterward fall into, do need particular pardons; yet, by renewed acts of faith and repentance, the believer applies to himself the righteousness of Christ, and they are pardoned.

Again, they carefully distinguish betwixt,

1. Its application by God to our persons. And,

2. Its declaration, or manifestation in us, and to us.

Which manifestation, or declaration, is either,

1. Private, in the conscience of a believer; or,

2. Public, at the bar of judgment.

And thus justification is many ways distinguished. And, notwithstanding all this, it is still *actus individuus*, an undivided act, not on our part, for it is iterated in many acts; but on God's part, who at once decreed it; and on Christ's part, who by one offering purchased it, and, at the time of our vocation, universally applied it, as to the state of the person justified; and that so effectually, as no future sin shall bring that person any more under condemnation.

In this sentence or judgment the generality of reformed or-

thodox divines are agreed; and the want of diſtinguiſhing, (as they, according to ſcripture, have diſtinguiſhed) hath led the Antinomians into this firſt error about juſtification, and that error hath led them into the moſt of the other errors. That this doctrine of theirs (which teaches that men are juſtified actually and completely, before they have a being) is an error, and hath no ſolid foundation to ſupport it, may be evidenced by theſe three reaſons.

1. Becauſe it is irrational.
2. Becauſe it is unſcriptural.
3. Becauſe it is injurious to Chriſt and the ſouls of men.

Reaſon 1. It is irrational to imagine, that men are actually juſtified before they have a being, by an immanent act or decree of God. Many things have been urged upon this account, to confute and deſtroy this fancy, and much more may be rationally urged againſt it: let the following particulars be weighed in the balance of reaſon.

1. Can we rationally ſuppoſe, that pardon and acceptance can be affirmed or predicated of that which is not? Reaſon tells us, *Non entis nulla ſunt accidentia*; that which is not, can neither be condemned nor juſtified: but before the creation, or before a man's particular conception, he was not, and therefore could not in his own perſon be the ſubject of juſtification. Where there is no law, there is no ſin; where there is no ſin, there is no puniſhment; where there is neither ſin nor puniſhment, there can be no guilt; (for guilt is an obligation to puniſhment); and where there is neither law nor ſin, nor obligation to puniſhment, there can be no juſtification. He that is not capable of a charge, is not capable of a diſcharge. What remains then, but that either the elect muſt exiſt from eternity, or be juſtified in time? It is true, future beings may be conſidered, as in the purpoſe and decree of God from all eternity, or as in the intention of Chriſt, who died intentionally for the ſins of the elect, and roſe again for their juſtification; but neither the decree of God, nor the death of Chriſt takes place upon *any* man for his actual juſtification, until he perſonally exiſt: for the object of juſtification, is a ſinner actually ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. but ſo no man is, or can be ſo from eternity. In election, men are conſidered without reſpect to good or evil done by them, Rom. ix. 11. not ſo in actual juſtification.

2. In juſtification there is a change made upon the ſtate of the perſon, Rom. v. 8, 9. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11. By juſtification men paſs from a ſtate of death to a ſtate of life, John v. 24. but the decree or purpoſe of God, in itſelf, makes no ſuch actual

change upon the ſtate of any perſon: it hath indeed the nature of an univerſal cauſe; but an univerſal cauſe produceth nothing, without particulars. If our ſtate be changed, it is not by an immanent act of God: hence no ſuch thing doth *tranſire*. A mere *velle non punire*, or intention to juſtify us in due time and order, makes no change on our ſtate, till that come, and the particular cauſes have wrought. A prince may have a purpoſe or intention to pardon a law-condemned traitor, and free him from that condemnation in due time; but whilſt the law that condemned him, ſtands in its full force and power againſt him, he is not juſtified or acquitted, notwithſtanding that gracious intention, but ſtands ſtill condemned. So it is with us, till by faith we are implanted into Chriſt. It is true, Chriſt is a ſurety for all his, and hath ſatisfied the debt, he is a common head to all his, as Adam was to all his children, Rom. v. 19. but as the ſin of Adam condemns none but thoſe that are in him; ſo the righteouſneſs of Chriſt actually juſtifies none but thoſe that are in him; and none are actually in him but believers: therefore, till we believe, no actual change paſſeth, or can paſs upon our ſtates. So that this hypotheſis is contrary to reaſon.

Reaſon 2. As this opinion is irrational, ſo it is unſcriptural. For,

1. The ſcripture frequently ſpeaks of remiſſion or juſtification as a future act, and therefore not from eternity, Rom. iv. 23, 24. "Now it was not written for his ſake alone, that it was "imputed to him; but for us alſo, to whom it ſhall be imputed, if we believe on him," &c. And, Gal. iii. 8. "The ſcriptures foreſeeing that God would juſtify the Heathen through "faith, preached before the goſpel unto Abraham." The goſpel was preached many years before the Gentiles were juſtified; but if they were juſtified from eternity, how was the goſpel preached before their juſtification?

2. The ſcripture leaves all unbelievers, without diſtinction, under condemnation and wrath. The curſe of the law lies upon them all till they believe, John iii. 18. "He that believeth in "him is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condem"ned already." And, Eph. ii. 3. 12, 13. The very elect themſelves *were by nature the children of wrath, even as others*. They were at that time, or during that ſtate of nature, (which takes in all that whole ſpace betwixt their conception and converſion), *without Chriſt, without hope, without God in the world*. But, if this opinion be true, that the elect were juſtified from eter-

nity, or from the time of Chriſt's death, then it cannot be true, that the elect by nature are children of wrath, without Chriſt, without hope, without God in the world; except theſe two may conſiſt together, (which is abſolutely impoſſible), that the children of wrath, without God, Chriſt, or hope, are actually diſcharged from their ſins and dangers, by a free and gracious act of juſtification.

Objection. But doth not the ſcripture ſay, Rom. viii. 33. "Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?" If none can charge the elect, then God hath diſcharged them.

Solution. God hath not actually diſcharged them, as they are elect, but as they are juſtified elect; for ſo runs the text, and clears itſelf in the very next words, *It is God that juſtifieth.* When God hath actually juſtified an elect perſon, none can charge him.

(3.) 'Tis croſs to the Scripture order of juſtification, which places it not only after Chriſt's death in the place laſt cited, Rom. viii. 33. but alſo after our actual vocation; as is plain, ver. 30. "Moreover, whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called; and "whom he called, them he alſo juſtified; and whom he juſti-"fied, them he alſo glorified." Is it abſurd to place vocation before predeſtination, or glorification before juſtification? Sure, then, it muſt be abſurd, alſo, to place juſtification before vocation; the one, as well as the other, confounds and breaks the ſcripture order: You may as well ſay, men ſhall be glorified, that were never juſtified; as ſay they may be juſtified before they believed, or exiſted. So that you ſee the notion of juſtification from eternity, or before our actual exiſtence, and effectual vocation, is a notion as repugnant to ſacred ſcripture, as it is to ſound reaſon.

Reaſon 3. And as it is found repugnant to reaſon, and ſcripture, ſo it is highly injurious to Jeſus Chriſt and the ſouls of men.

(1.) It greatly injures the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and robs him of the glory of being our Saviour; for if the elect be juſtified from eternity, Chriſt cannot be the Saviour of the elect, as moſt aſſuredly he is; for if Chriſt ſave them, he muſt ſave them as perſons ſubject to periſhing, either *de facto*, or *de jure*. But if the elect were juſtified from eternity, they could, in neither reſpect, be ſubject to periſhing: For he that was eternally juſtified, was never condemned, nor capable of condemnation; and he that never was, nor could be condemned, could never be ſubject to periſhing; and he that never was, nor could be ſubject to periſhing, can never truly, and properly be ſaid to be ſaved.

If it be said the elect were not justified till the death of Christ; I demand, then, what became of all them that died before the death of Christ? If they were not justified, they could not be glorified; for this is sure, from Rom. viii. 30. that the whole number of the glorified in heaven is made up of such as were justified on earth: Let men take heed, therefore, lest, under pretence of exalting Christ, they bereave him of the glory of being the Saviour of his elect.

(2.) It bereaves him of another glorious royalty. The scripture every where makes our justification the result and fruit of the meritorious death of Christ, Rom. iii. 24, 25. Rom. viii. 3, 4. 2 Cor. v. 19, 20. Gal. iii. 13, 14. Eph. i. 17. but if men were justified from eternity, how is their justification the fruit and result of the blood of the cross? as it plainly appears, from these scriptures, to be. Nay,

(3.) This opinion leaves no place for the satisfaction of justice by the blood of Christ, for our sins. He did not die according to this opinion, to pay our debts. And here Antinomianism and Socinianism meet, and congratulate each other: For if there were no debts owing to the justice of God from eternity, Christ could not die to pay them; and it is manifest there were no debts due to God's justice from eternity, on the account of his elect, if the elect were from eternity justified; unless you will say, a person may be justified, and yet his debts not paid: For all justification dissolves the obligation to punishment.

If there were any debt for Christ to pay, by his blood, they must either be his own debts, or the elects. To say they were his own, is a blasphemous reproach to him; and, according to this opinion, we cannot say they were the elects; for if they were justified from eternity, their debts were discharged, and their bonds cancelled from eternity. So that this opinion leaves nothing to the blood of Christ to discharge, or make satisfaction for.

(4.) And as it hath been proved to be highly injurious to the Lord Jesus, so it is greatly injurious to the souls of men, as it naturally leads them into all those wild and licentious opinions, which naturally flow from it, as from the radical, prolific error, whence most of the rest derive themselves, as will immediately appear, in

Error II. *That justification by faith is no more but the manifestation to us of what was really, and actually done before. Or a being persuaded more or less of Christ's love to us. And that*

when perſons do believe, that which was hid before, doth then only appear to them.

Refutation. As the former error dangerouſly corrupts the doctrine of juſtification, ſo this corrupts the doctrine of faith; and therefore deſerves to be exploded by all Chriſtians.

That there is a manifeſtation, and diſcovery of the ſpecial love of God, and our own ſaving concernment, in the death of Chriſt, to ſome Chriſtians, at ſome times, cannot be denied. St. Paul could ſay, Gal. ii. 20, 21. Chriſt loved him, and gave himſelf for him; but to ſay that this is the juſtifying act of faith, whereby a ſinner paſſes from condemnation and death, into the ſtate of righteouſneſs and life; this I muſt look upon as a great error; and that for the following reaſons:

Reaſon 1. Becauſe there be multitudes of believing and juſtified perſons in the world, who have no ſuch manifeſtation, evidence, or aſſurance, that God laid their iniquities upon Chriſt, and that he died to put away their ſins; but daily conflict with ſtrong fears and doubts, whether it be ſo, or no. There are but few among believers, that attain ſuch a perſuaſion, and manifeſtation, as Antinomians make to be all that is meant in ſcripture by juſtification through faith. Many thouſand new-born Chriſtians live as the new-born babe, which neither knows its own eſtate, or inheritance, to which it is born.

Vivit, et eſt vitæ neſcius ipſe ſuæ.

"Not conſcious of its life, it lives."

A ſoul may be in Chriſt, and a juſtified ſtate, without any ſuch perſuaſion, or manifeſtation, as they here ſpeak of, Iſa. l. 10. and if any ſhall aſſert the contrary, he will condemn the greateſt part of the generation of God's children. Now that cannot be the ſaving and juſtifying act of faith, which is not to be found in multitudes of believing and juſtified perſons.

But manifeſtation, or a perſonal perſuaſion of the love of God to a man's ſoul, or that Chriſt died for him, and all his iniquities are thereby forgiven him, is not to be found in multitudes of believing and juſtified ſouls.

Therefore ſuch a perſuaſion, or manifeſtation, is not that ſaving juſtifying faith, which the ſcripture ſpeaks of.

That faith which only juſtifies the perſon of a ſinner before God, muſt neceſſarily be found in all juſtified believers, or elſe a man may be juſtified, without the leaſt degree of juſtifying faith, and conſequently it is not faith alone, by which a man is juſtified before God.

Reaſon 2. That cannot be the juſtifying act of faith, which

is not conſtant and abiding, with the juſtified perſon, but comes and goes, is frequently loſt and recovered, the ſtate of the perſon ſtill remaining the ſame. And ſuch contingent things are theſe perſuaſions and manifeſtations: they come and go, are won and loſt, the ſtate of the perſon ſtill remaining the ſame. Job was as much a juſtified believer when he complained that God was his enemy, as when he could ſay, "I know that "my Redeemer liveth." The ſame may be ſaid of David, Heman, Aſaph, and the greateſt number of juſtified believers recorded in the ſcripture. There be two things belonging to a juſtified ſtate, (1.) That which is eſſential and inſeparable, to wit, faith uniting the ſoul to Chriſt. (2.) That which is contingent and ſeparable, to wit, evidence, and perſuaſion of our intereſt in him. Thoſe believers that walk in darkneſs, and have no light, have yet a real, ſpecial intereſt in God as their God, Iſa. l. 10. Here, then, you find believers without perſuaſion, or manifeſtation of God's love to them; which could never be, if juſtifying faith conſiſted in a perſonal perſuaſion, manifeſtation, or evidence of the love of God, and pardon of ſin to a man's ſoul. That cannot be the juſtifying faith ſpoken of in ſcripture, which a juſtified perſon may live in Chriſt without, and be as much in a ſtate of pardon, and acceptation with God, when he wants it, as when he hath it. But ſuch is perſuaſion, evidence, or manifeſtation of a man's particular intereſt in the love of God, or the pardon of his ſins. Therefore this is not the juſtifying faith the ſcripture ſpeaks of.

Reaſon 3. That only is juſtifying, ſaving faith, which gives the ſoul right and title to Chriſt, and the ſaving benefits which come by Chriſt upon all the children of God. Now, it is not perſuaſion that Chriſt is ours, but acceptation of him, that gives us intereſt in Chriſt, and the ſaving benefits and privileges of the children of God, John i. 12. "But as many as received "him, to them gave he power to become the ſons of God; "even to them that believe on his name." So that unleſs the Antinomians can prove, that receiving of Chriſt, and perſonal perſuaſion of pardon, be one and the ſame thing, and conſequently, that all believers in the world are perſuaded, or aſſured that their ſins are pardoned; and reject from the number of believers all tempted, deſerted, dark and doubting Chriſtians; this perſuaſion they ſpeak of, is not, nor can it be the act of faith, which juſtifies the perſon of a ſinner before God. That which I think led our Antinomians into this error, was an unſound, and unwary definition of faith, which, in their youth, they had imbibed from their catechiſms, and other ſyſtems, paſ-

ſing without contradiction, or ſcruple in thoſe days; which though it were a miſtake, and hath abundantly been proved to be ſo in latter days; yet our Antinomians will not part with a notion ſo ſerviceable to the ſupport of the darling opinion of eternal juſtification.

Reaſon 4. A man may be ſtrongly perſuaded of the love of God to his ſoul, and of the pardon of his ſins, and yet have no intereſt in Chriſt, nor be in a pardoned ſtate. This was the caſe of the Phariſees, and others, Luke xviii. 9. Rev. iii. 17. therefore this perſuaſion cannot be juſtifying faith. If a perſuaſion be that which juſtifies the perſuaded perſon, then the Phariſees and Laodiceans were juſtified. Oh! how common and eaſy is it for the worſt of men to be ſtrongly perſuaded of their good condition, whilſt humble, ſerious Chriſtians doubt and ſtagger? I know not what ſuch doctrine as this is uſeful for, but to beget and ſtrengthen that ſin of preſumption, which ſends down multitudes to hell, out of the profeſſing world: For what is more common amongſt the moſt carnal and unſanctified part of the world, not only ſuch as are merely moral, but even the moſt flagitious and prophane, than to ſupport themſelves by falſe perſuaſions of their good eſtate? When they are aſked, in order to their conviction, what hopes of ſalvation they have, and how they are founded? their common anſwer is, Chriſt died for ſinners, and that they are perſuaded, that whatever he hath done for any other, he hath done it for them as well as others: but ſuch a perſuaſion cometh not of him that called them, and is of dangerous conſequence.

Reaſon 5. This doctrine is certainly unſound, becauſe it confounds the diſtinction betwixt dogmatical and ſaving faith; and makes it all one, to believe an *axiom* or propoſition, and to believe ſavingly in Chriſt to eternal life. What is it to believe that God laid our iniquities upon Chriſt, more than the mere aſſent of the underſtanding to a ſcripture axiom, or propoſition, without any conſent of the will, to receive Jeſus Chriſt, as the goſpel offers him? And this is no more than what any unregenerate perſon may do; yea, the very devils themſelves aſſent to the truth of ſcripture axioms or propoſitions as well as men, James ii. 19. "Thou believeſt there is one God, thou doſt "well; the devils alſo believe and tremble." What is more than a ſcripture axiom or propoſition? "God laid the iniqui-"ties of us all upon Chriſt," Iſa. liii. 6. And yet (ſaith Dr. Criſp, p. 296.) God cannot charge one ſin upon that man that believes this truth, *That God laid his iniquities upon Chriſt.* The aſſent of the underſtanding may be often given to a

ſcripture-propoſition, whilſt the heart and will remain carnal, and utterly averſe to Jeſus Chriſt. I may believe dogmatically, that the iniquities of men were laid upon Chriſt, and perſuade myſelf preſumptively, that mine, as well as other mens, were laid upon him; and yet remain a perfect ſtranger to all ſaving union and communion with him.

Reaſon 6. This opinion cannot be true, becauſe it takes away the only ſupport that bears up the ſoul of a believer in times of temptation and deſertion.

For how will you comfort ſuch a diſtreſſed ſoul that ſaith, and ſaith truly, I have no perſuaſion that Chriſt is mine, or that my ſins are pardoned; but I am heartily willing to caſt my poor ſin-burthened ſoul upon him, that he may be mine; I do not certainly know that he died intentionally for me, but I lie at his feet, cleave to him, wait at the door of hope; I ſtay and truſt upon him, though I walk in darkneſs, and have no light. Now let ſuch doctrine as this be preached to a ſoul in this condition (and we may be ſure 'tis the condition of many thouſands belonging to Chriſt) I ſay, bring this doctrine to them, and tell them, that unleſs they be perſuaded of the love of God, and that God laid their iniquities on Chriſt, except they have ſome manifeſtation that their perſons were juſtified from eternity, their accepting of Chriſt, conſent of their wills, waiting at his feet, *&c.* ſignifies nothing; if they believe not that their particular ſins were laid upon Chriſt, and are pardoned to them by him, they are ſtill unbelievers, and have no part or portion in him. Whatever pretences of ſpiritual comfort and relief the Antinomian doctrine makes, you ſee by this it really deprives a very great, if not the greateſt number of God's people of their beſt and ſweeteſt relief in days of darkneſs and ſpiritual diſtreſs. So that this doctrine which makes manifeſtation and aſſurance the very eſſence of juſtifying faith, appears hereby to be both a falſe and very dangerous doctrine. And yet there is as much, or more, danger to the ſouls of men, in their

Error. 3. *That men ought not to doubt of their faith, or queſtion whether they believe or no. Nay, that they ought no more to queſtion their faith, than to queſtion Chriſt.*

Refutation. What an eaſy way to heaven is the Antinomian way? Were it but as true and ſafe to the ſoul, as it is eaſy and pleaſing to the fleſh, who would not embrace it? What a charm of the devil is prepared in thoſe two propoſitions? Be but perſuaded more or leſs of Chriſt's love to thy ſoul (ſaith Mr. Saltmarſh) and that's juſtifying faith. Here's a ſnare of the devil laid for the ſouls of men. And then (2.) to make it faſt

and ſure upon the ſoul, and effectually to prevent the diſcovery of their error, tell them they need no more to doubt or queſtion their faith, than to queſtion Chriſt, and the work is done to all intents.

Now that this is an error, and a very dangerous one, will appear by the following reaſons.

Reaſon 1. The queſtioning and examining of our faith, is a commanded ſcripture-duty, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine your-"ſelves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your ownſelves," *&c.* And 2 Pet. i. 10. "Give diligence to make your calling "and election ſure. Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth, take "heed leſt he fall." 1 Cor. x. 12. *The ſecond epiſtle of* John, ver. 8. "Look to yourſelves, that we loſe not the things which "we have wrought:" With multitude of other ſcriptures, recommending holy jealouſy, ſerious ſelf-trial and examination of our faith, as the unqueſtionable duties of the people of God. But if we ought to queſtion our faith no more than we ought to queſtion Chriſt, away then with all ſelf-examination, and diligence to make our calling and election ſure; for where there is no doubt nor danger, there's no place or room for examination, or further endeavours to make it ſurer than it is. *How* do you like this doctrine, Chriſtians? How many be there among you, that find no more cauſe to queſtion your own faith or intereſt in Chriſt, than you do to queſtion, whether there be a Chriſt, or whether he ſhed his blood for the remiſſion of any man's ſins?

Reaſon. 2. This is a very dangerous error, and it is the more dangerous, becauſe it leaves no way to recover a preſumptuous ſinner out of his dangerous miſtakes; but confirms and fixes him in them, to the great hazard of his eternal ruin. It cuts off all means of conviction or better information, and nails them faſt to the carnal ſtate in which they are. According to this doctrine, 'tis impoſſible for a man to think himſelf ſomething, when he is nothing; or to be guilty of ſuch a paralogiſm and cheat, put by himſelf upon his own ſoul, Jam. ii. 22. this, in effect, bids a man keep on right or wrong; he is ſure enough of heaven, if he be but ſtrongly perſuaded that Chriſt died for him, and he ſhall come thither at laſt. Certainly this was not the counſel Chriſt gave to the ſelf-deceived Laodiceans, Rev. iii. 17, 18, but inſtead of diſſuading them from ſelf-jealouſy and ſuſpicion of their condition, whether their faith and ſtate were ſafe or not, he rather counſels them to buy eye-ſalve, that is, to labour after better information of the true ſtate and

condition they were in, and not cast away their souls by false persuasions and vain confidences.

Reason 3. This doctrine cannot be true, because it supposes every persuasion, or strong conceit of a man's own heart, to be as infallibly sure and certain, as the very fundamental doctrines of Christianity. No truth in the world can be surer than this, that Jesus Christ died for sinners. "This is a faithful say-"ing, and worthy of all acceptation," 1 Tim. i. 15. This is a foundation-stone, a tried, precious corner-stone, a sure foundation laid by God himself, Isa. xxviii. 16. and shall the strong conceits and confidences of men's hearts vie and compare, in point of certainty, with it? As well may probable, and merely conjectural propositions, compare with axioms that are self-evident, or demonstrative arguments that leave no doubts behind them. Know we not, that the heart is deceitful above all things, the most notorious cheat and impostor in the world, Jer. xvii. 9.? Does it not deceive all the formal hypocrites in the world, in this very point? And shall every strong conceit and presumptuous confidence, begotten of Satan by a deceitful heart, and nursed up by self-love, pass without any examination or suspicion for as infallible and assured a truth, as that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners? The Lord sweep that doctrine out of the world by reformation, which is like to sweep so many thousand souls into hell by a remediless self-deception.

Error. 4. The fourth Antinomian error before-mentioned, was this, *That believers are not bound to confess their sins, or pray for the pardon of them; because their sins were pardoned before they were committed; and pardoned sin is no sin.*

Refutation. If this be true doctrine, then it will justify and make good such conclusions and inferences as these, which necessarily flow from it: *viz.*

1. That there is no sin in believers.
2. Or if there be, the evil is very inconsiderable. Or,
3. Whatever evil is in it, it is not the will of God that they should either confess it, mourn over it, or pray for the remission of it; whatever he requires of others, yet they need take no notice of it, so as to afflict their hearts for it; God hath exempted them from such concernments: There's nothing but joy to a believer, saith Mr. Eaton. But neither of these conclusions are either true or tolerable; therefore neither is the principle so which yieldeth them.

(1.) It is not true or tolerable to affirm, that there is no sin in a believer, 1 John i. 18. "If we say we have no sin, "we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. There is "not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not," Eccl. vii. 20. "In many things we offend all," James iii. 2. The scriptures plainly affirm it, and the universal experience of all the saints sadly confirms it. 'Tis true, the blood of Christ hath taken away the guilt of sin, so that it shall not condemn believers; and the spirit of sanctification hath taken away the dominion of sin, so that it doth not reign over believers; but nothing, except glorification, utterly destroys the existence of sin in believers. The acts of sin are our acts, and not Christ's; and the stain and pollution of those sinful acts, are the burthens and infelicities of believers, even in their justified state. Dr. Crisp indeed in, *p.* 270, 271. calls that objection (I suppose he means distinction betwixt the guilt of sin and sin itself) a simple objection, and tells us, the very sin itself, as well as the guilt of it, passed off from us, and was laid upon Christ: So that speaking of the sins of blasphemy, murder, theft, adultery, lying, *&c.* From that time (saith he) that they were laid upon Christ, thou ceasest to be a transgressor. If thou hast part in the Lord Christ, all these transgressions of thine become actually the transgressions of Christ. So that now thou art not an idolater, or persecutor, a thief, a murderer, and an adulterer, thou art not a sinful person; Christ is made that very sinfulness before God, *&c.* Such expressions justly offend and grieve the hearts of Christians, and expose Christianity to scorn and contempt. Was it not enough that the guilt of our sin was laid on him, but we must imagine also, that the thing itself, sin, with all the deformity and pollution should be essentially transferred from us to Christ? No, no. After we are justified, sin dwelleth in us, Rom. vii. 17. warreth in us, and brings us into captivity, ver. 23. burthens and oppresses our very souls, ver. 24. Methinks I need not stand to prove what I should think no sound experienced Christian dares to deny, that there is much sin still remaining in the persons of the justified. He that dares to deny it, hath little acquaintance with the nature of sin, and of his own heart.

(2.) It is neither true nor tolerable to say, there is no considerable evil in the sins of believers, deserving a mournful confession or petition for pardon. The desert of sin is hell; 'tis an artifice of Satan to draw men to sin, by persuading them there is no great evil in it; but none except fools will believe it. Fools, indeed, make a mock of sin; but all that understand

either the intrinsic evil of it, or the sad and dismal effects produced by it, are far from thinking it a light or inconsiderable evil. The sins, even of believers, greatly wrong and offend their God, Psal. li. 4. and is that a light thing with us? They interrupt and clog our communion with God, Rom. vii. 21. They grieve the good Spirit of God, Eph. iv. 30. Certainly these are no inconsiderable mischiefs.

(3.) Now if there be sin in believers, and so much evil in their sins (neither of which any sober Christian will deny) then undoubtedly it is their duty to confess it freely, mourn for it bitterly, and pray for the pardon of it earnestly; unless God have any where discharged them from those duties, and told them these are none of their concernments, and that he expects not these things from justified persons; but that these are duties properly and only belonging to other men. But on the contrary, you find the whole current of scripture running strongly and constantly in direct opposition to such idle and sinful notions. For,

(1.) He hath plainly declared it to be his will, that his people should confess their sins before him, and strongly connected their confessions with their pardons, 1 John v. 9. and frequently suspends from them the comfortable sense of forgiveness, till their hearts be brought to this duty, Psal. xxxii. 5. compared with verse 3, 4. the more to engage them to this duty, by the sensible ease and comfort attending and following it.

(2.) He also enjoins it upon them, That they mourn for their sins, Isa. xxii. 12. expresses his great delight in contrition and brokenness of spirit for sin; Isa. lxvi. 2. "To this man will I "look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit." Christ himself pronounces a blessing upon them that mourn, Mat. v. 4. Justified Paul mournfully confesses his former blasphemies, persecutions, and injuries done against Christ, 1 Tim. i. 13. So did Ezra, Daniel, and other eximious saints.

Object. Yes, say some, they did indeed confess their sins committed before their justification, but not their after-sins.

Reply. According to Antinomian principles, I would demand, If all the elect were justified from eternity, what sins any of them could confess which they had committed before their justification? Or, if they were justified from the time of Christ's death, what were the sins any of us have to confess who had not a being, and therefore had not actually sinned long after the death of Christ? But I hope none will deny, that the mourn-

ful complaints the apoſtle makes for ſin, Rom. vii. 23, 24. were after he was a ſanctified and juſtified perſon.

(3.) It is not the will of Chriſt to exempt any juſtified perſon upon earth, from the duty of praying frequently and fervently for the remiſſion of his ſins. This the moſt eminent ſaints upon earth have done. The greateſt favourites of heaven have freely confeſſed, and heartily prayed for the remiſſion of ſin, Dan. ix. 4, 19. And that the goſpel gives us no exemption from this duty, appears by Chriſt's injunction of it upon all his people, Mat. vi. 12.

Error 5. To give countenance to the former error, they ſay, *That God ſees no ſin in believers, whatſoever ſins they commit;* and ſeek a covert for this error from Numb. xxiii. 21. and Jer. l. 20. In the former place it is ſaid by Balaam, "He hath not "beheld iniquity in Jacob, nor ſeen perverſeneſs in Iſrael." And in the other place it is ſaid, "In thoſe days, and in that time, "ſaith the Lord, the iniquity of Iſrael ſhall be ſought for, and "there ſhall be none; and the ſins of Judah, and they ſhall "not be found: for I will pardon them, whom I reſerve."

Refutation. Now that this opinion of the Antinomians is erroneous, will appear four ways.

1. By its repugnancy to God's omniſcience.
2. By its inconſiſtency with his diſpenſations.
3. By its want of a ſcripture-foundation.
4. By its contradictorineſs to their other principles.

It is true, and we thankfully acknowlege it, that God ſees no ſin in believers, as a judge ſees guilt in a malefactor, to condemn him for it; that is a ſure and comfortable truth for us: but to ſay he ſees no ſin in his children, as a diſpleaſed father, to correct and chaſten them for it, is an aſſertion repugnant to ſcripture, and very injurious to God. For,

(1.) It is injurious to God's *omniſcience*, Pſal. cxxxix. 2. "Thou, (ſaith holy David,) knoweſt my down-ſitting, and "my up-riſing, and underſtandeſt my thoughts afar off, and "art acquainted with all my ways." Job xxviii. 24. "He "looketh to the ends of the earth, and ſeeth under the whole "heavens." Prov. xv. 3. "The eyes of the Lord are in every "place, beholding the evil and the good." Pſal. xxxiii. 14, 15. "From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the "inhabitants of the earth; he faſhioneth their hearts alike, he "conſidereth all their works." He that denies that God ſeeth his moſt ſecret ſins, therein, conſequentially, denies him to be God.

(2.) This aſſertion is inconſiſtent with God's providential diſ-

penſations to his people. When David, a juſtified believer had ſinned againſt him in the matter of Uriah, it is ſaid, 2 Sam. xi. 27. "the thing that David had done diſpleaſed the Lord:" and, as the effect of that diſpleaſure, it is ſaid, chap. xii. 15. "The Lord ſtruck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto Da-"vid, and it was very ſick." Among the Corinthians ſome that ſhould not be condemned with the world, were judged and chaſtened of the Lord for their undue approaches to his table, 1 Cor. xi. 32. Now, I would aſk the Antinomians theſe two queſtions. *Queſt.* 1. Whether it can be denied, that David, under the Old Teſtament, and theſe Corinthians under the New, were juſtified perſons; and yet the former ſtricken by God in his child, with its ſickneſs and death; and the latter in like manner ſmitten by God in their own perſons; and both for their reſpective ſins committed againſt God; and yet God ſaw no ſin in them? Did God ſmite them for ſin, and yet beheld no ſin in them? Beware leſt in aſcribing ſuch ſtrokes to God, you ſtrike at once both at his omniſciency and juſtice. *Queſt.* 2. How God, upon confeſſion and repentance, can be ſaid to put away his peoples ſins (as Nathan there aſſures David he had done) when in the mean time he ſaw no ſin in him, either to chaſtiſe him for, or to pardon in him? Do you think that God's afflictions, or pardons, are blindfold acts, done at random? How inconſiſtent is this with divine diſpenſations.

(3.) This opinion is altogether deſtitute of a ſcripture-foundation; it is evident it hath none in the only places alledged for it. It hath no footing at all in Numb. xxiii. 21. Grave and learned Gataker hath learnedly and induſtriouſly vindicated that ſcripture from this abuſe of it by Antinomians, in his treatiſe upon that text, entitled, *God's eye upon his Iſrael;* where, after a learned and critical ſearch of the text, he telleth us, it ſoundeth word for word thus from the originial; "He hath "not beheld wrong againſt Jacob, nor hath he ſeen grievance "againſt Iſrael." So that the meaning is not, that God did not ſee ſin in Iſrael, but that he beheld not with approbation the wrongs and injuries done by others againſt his Iſrael; and ſhews at large, by divers ſolid reaſons, why the Antinomian ſenſe cannot be the proper ſenſe of that place, it being croſs to the main tenor of the ſtory, and truth of God's word; which ſhews, that God often complained of their ſins, often threatened to avenge them; yea, did actually avenge them, by deſtroying them in the wilderneſs; nay, Balaam himſelf, who uttered theſe words unto Balak, did not ſo underſtand them, as appears by the advice he gave to Balak, to draw them into ſin, that

thereby God might be provoked to withdraw his protection from them.

And for Jer. l. 20. it makes nothing to their purpose. Many expound the sin there sought after, and not found to be the sin of idolatry, which Israel should be purged from by their captivity, according to Isa. xxvii. 9. But the generality of sound expositors are agreed, that by the not finding of Israel's and Judah's sin, is meant no more, but his not finding those bonds or obligations against them to eternal punishment, which their sins had put them under.

(4.) In a word, this opinion clashes with their other principles. For they say, that though there was pardon and remission under the old covenant (which they allowed to be a covenant of grace) yet it was but *gradatim*, and successively, as they offered sacrifices. If a man had sinned ignorantly, until he brought a sacrifice, his sin lay upon him, it may be a week, a month's distance between, before they could have their pardon. *Vide* Dr. Crisp of the two covenants, p. 256, 257. Now I demand, If this were the state and case of all God's Israel under the Old Testament, why do these men affirm, that God can see no sin in a believer? and why do they expound the words of Balaam so contradictory to this their other opinion? For they will not deny but God sees unpardoned sins in all; and here is a week, or month, or more time, allowed between the commission and remission of their sin. And so much of the fifth Antinomian error.

Error 6. *That God is not angry with the elect, nor doth he smite them for their sins: and to say that he doth so, is an injurious reflection upon the justice of God, who hath received full satisfaction for all their sins from the hand of Christ.*

There are several mistakes and errors in these assertions; and I suppose our Antinomians were led into them, (1.) By their abhorrence of the Popish doctrine, which errs more dangerously in the other extreme; for they wickedly assert our sufferings to be satisfactory for our sins, which is the ground of Popish penances, and voluntary self-castigations. (2.) From a groundless apprehension, that God's corrections of us for our sins, are inconsistent with the fulness of Christ's satisfaction for them. Christ having paid all our debts, and dissolved our obligations to all punishment, it cannot consist with the justice of God to lay any rod upon us for our sins, after Christ hath borne all that our sins deserved.

This mistake of the end of Christ's death, occasions them to stumble into the other mistakes; they imagine that Christ's satisfaction abolished God's hatred of sin in believers. But this

cannot be; God's antipathy to sin can never be taken away by the satisfaction of Christ, though his hatred to the persons of the redeemed be; for the hatred of sin is found in the unchangeable nature of God: and he can as soon cease to be holy, as cease to hate sin, Hab. i. 13. Nor was Christ's death ever designed to this end; though Christ hath satisfied for the sins of believers, God still hates sin in believers. His hatred to their sins, and love to their persons, are not inconsistent. As a man may love his leg or arm, as they are members of his own body, and notwithstanding that love, hate the gangrene which hath taken them; and lance or use painful corrosives for the cure of them.

Neither do our Antinomians distinguish as they ought, betwixt vindictive punishments from God, the pure issues and effects of his justice and wrath against the wicked; and his paternal castigations, the pure issues of the care and love of a displeased Father. Great and manifold are the differences betwixt his vindictive wrath upon his enemies, and the rebukes of the rod upon his children. Those are legal, these evangelical. Those out of wrath and hatred, these out of love. Those unsanctified, but these blessed and sanctified to happy ends and purposes to his people. Those for destruction, these for salvation.

To narrow the matter in controversy as much as we can, I shall lay down three concessions about God's corrections of his people.

Concession 1. We chearfully and thankfully acknowledge the perfection and fulness of the satisfaction of Christ for all the sins of believers; and, with thankfulness do own, that if God should cast all, or any of them, into an ocean of temporal troubles and distresses; in all that sea of sorrow there would not be found one drop of vindictive wrath. Christ hath drunk the last drop of that cup, and left nothing for believers to suffer by way of satisfaction.

Concession 2. We grant also, that all the sufferings of believers in this world are not for their sins; but some of them are for the prevention of sin, 2 Cor. xii. 7. some for the trial of their graces, Jam. i. 2, 3. some for a confirming testimony to his truths, Acts v. 41. Such sufferings as these have much heavenly comfort concomitant with them.

Concession 3. We do not say that God's displeasure with his people for sin, evidenced against them in the sharpest rebukes of the rod, is any argument that God's love is turned into hatred against their persons: No, no, his love to his people is un-

changeable. Having loved his own, he loved them to the end, John xiii. 1. Yet notwithſtanding all this, three things are undeniably clear, and being thoroughly apprehended, will end this controverſy.

1. That God lays his correcting rod, in this world, on the perſons of believers.
2. That this rod of God is ſometimes laid on them for their ſins.
3. That theſe fatherly corrections of them for their ſins, are reconcilable to, and fully conſiſtent with his juſtice, completely ſatisfied by the blood of Chriſt for all their ſins.

1. That God lays his correcting rod, in this world, upon the perſons of believers. This no man can have the face to deny, that believes the ſcriptures to be the word of God, or that the troubles of good men in this life fall not out by caſuality, but by the counſel and direction of divine Providence. He that denies the hand of God to be upon the perſons of believers, in this life, in the way of painful chaſtiſements and ſufferings, muſt either ignorantly, or wilfully, overlook that ſcripture, Heb. xii. 8. "What ſon is he whom the Father chaſteneth not? but if "ye be without chaſtiſement, whereof all are partakers, then "are ye baſtards, and not ſons." Nor will any ſober Chriſtian deny theſe troubles of believers to be the effects of God's governing Providence in the world, or once imagine, or affirm them to be mere caſualties and contingencies; for "affliction cometh "not forth of the duſt, neither doth trouble ſpring out of the "ground," Job v. 6. In what Eutopia doth that good man live upon earth, that feels not the painful rod of God upon himſelf, nor hears the ſad laments and moans of other Chriſtians under it! This ſure is undeniable, that the rod of God is every where upon the perſons and tabernacles of the righteous; and if any doubt it, his own ſenſe and feeling may in a little time give him a painful demonſtration of it.

2. And for the ſecond, that this rod of God is ſometimes laid upon believers for their ſins, methinks no ſober modeſt Chriſtian in the world ſhould doubt or deny it, when he conſiders, that,

1. God himſelf hath ſo declared it.

2. The ſaints in all ages have freely confeſſed it to be ſo.

1. God himſelf hath fully and plainly declared it to be ſo, 2 Sam. xii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. "Wherefore haſt thou de"ſpiſed the commandment of the Lord, to do evil in his ſight? "Now therefore the ſword ſhall never depart from thy houſe," *&c.* Here is the ſword, a terrible and painful evil, upon David's houſe, a man after God's own heart, and that expreſly for his

in in the matter of Uriah. So Moſes, one of the greateſt favourites of heaven, for his ſinful ſhifting of the Lord's work, "The "anger of the Lord was kindled againſt Moſes," Exod. iv. 13, 14. "For the multitudes of thine iniquities, becauſe thy ſins "were increaſed, I have done theſe things unto thee," ſaith God to his own Iſrael, Jer. xxx. 15. To inſtance in all the declarations made by God himſelf in this caſe, were to tranſcribe part of both teſtaments.

2. And, as God hath declared the ſins of his people to be the provoking cauſes of his rods upon them; ſo they have freely and ingenuouſly confeſſed and acknowledged the ſame, Lam. iii. 39, 40. "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for "the puniſhment of his ſins? Let us ſearch and try our ways, "and turn again to the Lord." This was ſpoken by Jeremy, in the name of the whole captive church; ſo Pſal. xxxviii. 3, 5. "There is no ſoundneſs in my fleſh, (ſaith David) becauſe of "thine anger; neither is there any reſt in my bones, becauſe "of my ſin. My wounds ſtink, and are corrupt, becauſe of my "fooliſhneſs." And, were it not an hideous and unaccountable thing to hear a child of God, under his rod, to ſtand upon his own juſtification, and ſay, Lord, my ſins have not deſerved this at thy hand, nor is it juſtice in thee thus to chaſtiſe me after thou haſt received ſatisfaction for all my ſins from the hand of Chriſt? Would it not look like an horrid blaſphemy, to hear the beſt man in the world diſputing and denying the juſtice of God in the troubles he lays him under? For my own part, let the Lord lay on as ſmartly as he will upon me, I deſire to follow the holy patterns and precedents recorded in ſcripture for my imitation, and to ſay with the people of God, Ezra ix. 13. "Thou haſt puniſhed me leſs than mine iniquities deſerve." And Micah vii. 9. "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, be"cauſe I have ſinned againſt him." And he that refuſes ſo to do, gives little evidence of the ſpirit of adoption in him, but a very clear evidence of the pride and ignorance of his own heart. Job indeed ſtifly ſtood upon his own vindication; but that was when he had to do with men, who falſly charged him, laying thoſe ſins as the cauſes of his troubles, which he was innocent of, Job. xxii. 5, 6. But when he had to do with God, he diſputes no more, but ſaith, *Behold, I am vile, what ſhall I anſwer thee? I will lay my hand upon my mouth, q. d.* I have done, Father, I have done; whether theſe chaſtiſements be for my ſin or no, ſure I am, my ſin not only deſerves all this, but hell itſelf; thou art holy, but I am vile.

3. Nor can it at all be doubted, but that theſe fatherly corrections of the ſaints for their ſins, are reconcileable to, and fully conſiſtent with his juſtice, ſatisfied by the blood of Chriſt for all their ſins. For, (1.) If it were not ſo, the juſt and righteous God would never have inſerted ſuch a clauſe of reſervation in his gracious covenant with his people, to chaſten them as he ſaw need, after he had taken them into the covenant, Pſal. lxxxix. 30, 31, 32, 33. "If they tranſgreſs, he will viſit their "tranſgreſſions with a rod, and their iniquities with ſtripes; nevertheleſs (ſaith he) my loving-kindneſs will I not take away." That [*nevertheleſs*] clearly proves the conſiſtency of his ſtripes for ſin, with his loving-kindneſs to his people, and with Chriſt's ſatisfaction for their ſins. (2.) If this were not conſiſtent with the juſtice of God, to be ſure he would never ſingle them out to ſpend his rods upon, rather than others. It is moſt certain the holieſt men have moſt laſhes in this life: Aſaph ſaid, Pſal. lxxiii. 12, 14. "The ungodly proſper in the world, but he was chaſtened every morning;" and ver. 5. "The wicked are not in "trouble as other men." 1 Pet. iv. 17. "Judgment muſt begin at the houſe of God;" and if piety would give men an exemption from all troubles, pains and chaſtiſements, then men might diſcern love or hatred by the things that are before them, contrary to Eccl. ix. 1, 2. Neither could thoſe that are in Chriſt, ſuffer the painful agonies of death, becauſe of ſin, expreſly contrary to Paul, Rom. viii. 10. "And if Chriſt be in you, the body "is dead becauſe of ſin." (3.) In a word, As Chriſt never ſhed his blood to extinguiſh or aboliſh God's diſpleaſure againſt ſin, in whomſoever it be found, ſo he never ſhed it, to deprive his people of the manifold bleſſings and advantages that accrue to them by the rods of God upon them. It was never his intent to put us into a condition on earth, that would have been ſo much to our loſs. So then if the hand of God be upon his people for ſin, and conſiſtently enough with his juſtice, it muſt be an error, to ſay, God ſmites not believers for their ſins, and it would be injuſtice in him ſo to do: which is their ſixth error.

Error 7. They tell us, *That by God's laying our iniquities upon Chriſt, he became as completely ſinful as we, and we as completely righteous as Chriſt: That not only the guilt and puniſhment of ſin was laid upon Chriſt, but ſimply the very faults that men commit, the tranſgreſſion itſelf became the tranſgreſſion of Chriſt; iniquity itſelf, not in any figure, but plainly in itſelf, was laid on Chriſt; and that Chriſt himſelf was not more righteous than this perſon is, and this perſon is not more ſinful than Chriſt was.*

Refutation. These two propositions will never go down with sound and orthodox Christians: the first sinks and debases Christ too low, the other exalts the sinful creature too high. The one represents the pure and spotless Lord Jesus as sinful: the other represents the sinful creature as pure and perfect: and both these propositions seem evidently to be built upon these two hypotheses. (1.) *That the righteousness of Christ is subjectively and inherently in us, in the same fulness and perfection as it is in Christ:* grant that, and then it will follow indeed, That Christ himself is not more righteous than the believer is. (2.) *That not only the guilt and punishment of sin was laid on Christ by way of imputation: but sin itself, the very transgression, or sinfulness itself, was transferred from the elect to Christ: and that by God's laying it on him, the sinfulness or fault itself was essentially transfused into him; and so sin itself did* transire a subjecto in subjectum. Grant but this, and it can never be denied but that Christ became as completely sinful as we.

But both these hypotheses are not only notoriously false, but utterly impossible, as will be manifested by and by; but before I come to the refutation of them, it will be necessary to lay down some concessions to clear the orthodox doctrine in this controversy, and narrow the matter under debate, as much as may be.

(1.) And first, We thankfully acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ to be the *Surety* of the New Testament, Heb. vii. 22. and that as such, all the guilt and punishment of our sins, was laid upon him, Isa. liii. 5, 6. That is, God imputed, and he bare it in our room and stead. God the Father, as supreme Lawgiver and judge of all, upon the transgression of the law, admitted the sponsion or suretiship of Christ, to answer for the sins of men, Heb. x. 5, 6, 7. And for this very end he was made under the law, Gal. iv. 4, 5. And that Christ voluntarily took it upon him to answer as our *Surety*, whatsoever the law could lay to our charge; whence it became just and righteous that he should suffer.

(2.) We say, That God, by laying upon, or imputing the guilt of our sins to Christ, thereby our sins became legally his; as the debt is legally the Surety's debt, though he never borrowed one farthing of it: Thus God laid, and Christ took our sins upon him, though in him was no sin, 2 Cor. v. 21. "He hath "made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin," (*i. e.*) who was clean, and altogether void of sin.

(3.) We thankfully acknowledge, that Christ hath so fully sa-

tisfied the law for the ſins of all that are his, that the debts of believers are fully diſcharged, and the very laſt mite paid by Chriſt. His payment is full, and ſo therefore is our diſcharge and acquittance, Rom. viii. 1, 31. And that, by virtue hereof, the guilt of believers is ſo perfectly aboliſhed, that it ſhall never more bring them under condemnation, John v. 24. *And ſo in* Chriſt they are without fault before God.

4. We likewiſe grant, That as the guilt of our ſins *was by* God's imputation laid upon Chriſt, ſo the righteouſneſs of Chriſt is by God imputed to believers, by virtue of their union with Chriſt; and becomes thereby as truly and fully theirs, for the juſtification of their particular perſons before God, as if they themſelves had in their own perſons fulfilled all that the law requires, or ſuffered all that it threatened: No inherent righteouſneſs in our own perſons. is, or can be more truly our own, for this end and purpoſe, than Chriſt's imputed righteouſneſs is our own. He is *the Lord our righteouſneſs*. Jer. xxiii. 6. *We are made the righteouſneſs of God in him*, 1 Cor. v. 21. *Yea, the righteouſneſs of the law is fulfilled in them that believe*, Rom. viii. 4.

But notwithſtanding all this, we cannot ſay, (1.) That Chriſt became as completely ſinful as we. Or, (2.) That we are as completely righteous as Chriſt; and that over and above the guilt and puniſhment of ſin, (which we grant was laid upon Chriſt) ſin itſelf ſimply conſidered, or the very tranſgreſſion itſelf, became the ſin or tranſgreſſion of Chriſt; and conſequently that we are as completely righteous as Chriſt, and Chriſt as completely ſinful as we are.

1. We dare not ſay, that ſin ſimply conſidered, as the very tranſgreſſion of the law itſelf, as well as the guilt and puniſhment, became the very ſin and tranſgreſſion of Chriſt: For two things are diſtinctly to be conſidered and differenced, with reſpect to the law, and unto ſin. As to the law, we are to conſider in it,

1. Its preceptive part.
2. Its ſanction.

(1.) The preceptive part of the law, which gives ſin its formal nature, 1 John iii. 4. *For ſin is the tranſgreſſion of the law.* All tranſgreſſion ariſes from the preceptive part of the law of God: He that tranſgreſſeth the precepts, ſinneth; and under this conſideration ſin can never be communicated from one to another: The perſonal ſin of one, cannot be in this reſpect, the perſonal ſin of another: There is no phyſical tranſfuſion of the tranſgreſſion of the precept from one ſubject to ano-

ther: This is utterly impoſſible; even Adam's perſonal ſins, conſidered in his ſingle private capacity, are not communicable to his poſterity.

(2.) Beſides the tranſgreſſion of the preceptive part of the law, there is an obnoxiouſneſs unto puniſhment, ariſing from the ſanction of the law, which we call the guilt of ſin; and this (as judicious * Dr. Owen obſerves) is ſeparable from ſin: and if it were not ſeparable from the former, no ſinner in the world could either be pardoned or ſaved; guilt may be made another's by imputation, and yet that other not rendered formally a ſinner thereby: Upon this ground, we ſay the guilt and puniſhment of our ſin, was that only which was imputed unto Chriſt, but the very tranſgreſſion of the law itſelf, or ſin formally and eſſentially conſidered, could never be communicated or transfuſed from us unto him. I know but two ways in the world by which one man's ſins can be imagined to become another's, *viz.* Either by imputation, which is legal, and what we affirm; or by eſſential transfuſion from ſubject to ſubject (as our adverſaries fancy) which is utterly impoſſible; and we have as good ground to believe the abſurd doctrine of tranſubſtantiation, as this wild notion of the eſſential transfuſion of ſin. Guilt, ariſing from the ſanction of the law, may, and did paſs from us to Chriſt by legal imputation; but ſin itſelf, the very tranſgreſſion itſelf, ariſing from the very preceptive part of the law, cannot ſo paſs from us to Chriſt: For if we ſhould once imagine, that the very acts and habits of ſin, with the odious deformity thereof, ſhould paſs from our perſons to Chriſt, and ſubjectively to inhere in him, as they do in us; then it would follow,

Firſt, That our ſalvation would thereby be rendered utterly impoſſible. For ſuch an inheſion of ſin in the perſon of Chriſt, is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the hypoſtatical union, which union is the very foundation of his ſatisfaction, and our ſalvation. Though the Divine nature can, and doth dwell in union with the pure and ſinleſs human nature of Chriſt, yet it cannot dwell in union with ſin.

Secondly, This ſuppoſition would render the blood of the croſs altogether unable to ſatisfy for us. He could not have been the Lamb of God to take away the ſins of the world, if he had not been perfectly pure and ſpotleſs, 1 Pet. i. 19.

Thirdly, Had our ſins thus been eſſentially transfuſed into Chriſt, the law had had a juſt and valid exception againſt him;

* Owen of Juſtification, p. 183.

for it accepts of nothing but what is abſolutely pure and perfect. I admire, therefore, how any good men dare to call our doctrine, which teaches the imputation of our guilt and puniſhment to Chriſt, a ſimple doctrine; and aſſert, that the tranſgreſſion itſelf became Chriſt's; and that thereby Chriſt became as completely ſinful as we. And,

Fourthly, If the way of making our ſins Chriſt's by imputation, be thus rejected and derided; and Chriſt aſſerted, by ſome other way, to become as completely ſinful as we; then I cannot ſee which way to avoid it, but that the very ſame acts and habits of ſin muſt inhere, both in Chriſt, and in believers alſo. For, I ſuppoſe our adverſaries will not deny, that, notwithſtanding God's laying the ſins of believers upon Chriſt, there remain in all believers after their juſtification, ſinful inclinations and averſations; a law of ſin in their members, a body of ſin and death. Did theſe things paſs from them to Chriſt, and yet do they ſtill inhere in them? Why do they complain and groan of indwelling ſin? as Rom. vii. If ſin itſelf be ſo transferrred from them to Chriſt? Sure, unleſs men will dare to ſay, the ſame acts and habits of ſin which they feel in themſelves, are as truly in Chriſt as in themſelves, they have no ground to ſay, that by God's laying their iniquities upon Chriſt, he became as completely ſinful as they are; and if they ſhould ſo affirm, that affirmation would undermine the very foundation of their own ſalvation.

I therefore heartily ſubſcribe to that ſound and holy ſentence, of a clear and learned divine, * *Nothing is more abſolutly true, nothing more ſacredly and aſſuredly believed by us, than that nothing which Chriſt did or ſuffered, nothing that he undertook, or underwent, did, or could conſtitute him ſubjectively, inherently, and thereupon perſonally a ſinner, or guilty of any ſin of his own. To bear the guilt or blame of other mens faults, to be* alienae culpae reus, *makes no man a ſinner, unleſs he did unwiſely and irregularly undertake it.* So then this propoſition, that by God's laying our ſins upon Chriſt (in ſome other way, than by imputation of guilt and puniſhment) he became as completely ſinful as we, will not, ought not to be received as the ſound doctrine of the goſpel. Nor yet this

Second propoſition, *That we are as completely righteous as Chriſt is; or, that Chriſt is not more righteous than a believer.*

I cannot imagine what ſhould induce any man ſo to expreſs himſelf, unleſs it be a groundleſs conceit and fancy, that there

* Owen of Juſtification, p. 183.

is an effential transfufion of Chrift's juftifying righteoufnefs into believers, whereby it becomes theirs by way of fubjective inherfion, and is in them in the very fame manner it is in him: and fo every individual believer becomes as completely righteous as Chrift. And this conceit they would fain eftablifh upon that text, 1 John iii. 7. "He that doth righteoufnefs, is righteous, "even as he is righteous."

But neither this expreffion, nor any other like it in the fcriptures, gives the leaft countenance to fuch a general and unwary pofition. It is far from the mind of this fcripture, That the righteoufnefs of Chrift is formally and inherently ours, as it is his. Indeed it is ours relatively, not formally and inherently; not the fame with his for quantity, though it be the fame for verity. His righteoufnefs is not ours in its univerfal value, though it be ours, as to our particular ufe and neceffity. Nor is it made ours to make us fo many caufes of falvation to others; but it is imputed to us as to the fubjects, that are to be faved by it ourfelves.

'Tis true, we are juftified and faved by the very righteoufnefs of Chrift, and no other; but that righteoufnefs is formally inherent in him only, and is only materially imputed to us. It was actively his, but paffively ours. He wrought it, though we wear it. It was wrought in the perfon of God-man for the whole church, and is imputed (not transfufed) to every fingle believer for his own concernment only. For,

(1.) It is moft abfurd to imagine, that the righteoufnefs of Chrift fhould formally inhere in the perfon of every, or any believer, as it doth in the perfon of the mediator. The impoffibility hereof appears plainly from the incapacity of the fubject. The righteoufnefs of Chrift is an infinite righteoufnefs, becaufe it is the righteoufnefs of God-man, and can therefore be fubjected in no other perfon befide him. It is capable of being imputed to a finite creature, and therefore, in the way of imputation, we are faid *to be made the righteoufnefs of God in him*; but tho' it may be imputed to a finite creature, it inheres only in the perfon of the Son of God, as in its proper fubject. And indeed,

(2.) If it fhould be inherent in us, it could not be imputed to us, as it is, Rom. iv. 6, 23. Nor need we go out of ourfelves for juftification, as now we muft, Phil. iii. 9. but may juftify ourfelves by our own inherent righteoufnefs. And,

(3.) What fhould hinder, if this infinite righteoufnefs of Chrift were infufed into us, and fhould make us as completely righteous as Chrift; but that we might juftify others alfo, as

Chriſt doth, and ſo we might be the ſaviours of the elect, as Chriſt is? Which is moſt abſurd to imagine. And,

(4.) According to Antinomian principles, What need was there that we ſhould be juſtified at all? or, What place is left for the juſtification of any ſinner in the world? For, according to their opinion, the juſtification of the elect is an immanent act of God before the world was; and that eternal act of juſtification, making the elect as completely righteous as Chriſt himſelf, there could not poſſibly be any the leaſt guilt in the elect to be pardoned; and conſequently no place or room could be left for any juſtification in time. And then it muſt follow, that ſeeing Chriſt died in time for ſin, according to the ſcriptures; it muſt be for his own ſins that he died, and not for the ſins of the elect; diametrically oppoſite to Rom. iv. 25. and the whole current of ſcripture, and faith of Chriſtians.

It is therefore very unbecoming and unworthy of a juſtified perſon, after Chriſt hath taken all his guilt upon himſelf, and ſuffered all the puniſhment due thereunto in his place and room; inſtead of an humble and thankful admiration of his unparalleled grace therein, to throw more than the guilt and puniſhment of his ſins upon Chriſt, even the tranſgreſſion itſelf: and comparing his own righteouſneſs with Chriſt's, to ſay he is as completely righteous as Chriſt himſelf. This is, as if a company of bankrupt debtors, arreſted for their own debts, ready to be caſt into priſon, and not having one farthing to ſatisfy, after their debts have been freely and fully diſcharged by another, out of his immenſe treaſure, ſhould now compare with him, yea, and think they honour him, by telling him, that now they are as completely rich as himſelf.

I am well aſſured, no good man would embrace an opinion ſo derogatory to Chriſt's honour as this is: did he but ſee the odious conſequences of it, doubtleſs he would abhor them as much as we. And as for thoſe now in heaven, who fell into ſuch miſtakes in the way thither, were they now acquainted with what is tranſacted here below, they would exceedingly rejoice in the detection of thoſe miſtakes, and bleſs God for the refutation of them,

Error 8. *They affirm, That believers need not fear their own ſins, nor the ſins of others; foraſmuch as neither their own, or others ſins can do them any hurt, nor muſt they do any duty for their own good or ſalvation, or for eternal rewards.*

That we need fear no hurt from ſin, or may not aim at our own good in duty, are two propoſitions that ſound harſh in the

ears of believers. I shall consider them severally, and refute them as briefly as I can.

Proposition 1. *Believers need not fear their own sins, or the sins of others; because neither our own, or others sins can do us any hurt.*

They seem to be induced into this error, by misunderstanding the apostle, in Rom. viii. 28. as if the scope of that text were to assert the benefits of sin to justified persons; whereas he speaks there of adversities and afflictions befalling the saints in this life. *Universalis restringenda est ad materiam subjectam, loquitur enim de afflictionibus piorum.* The subject-matter (saith Paraeus on the place) restrains the universal expression of the apostle: for when he there saith, "All things shall work together for good;" he principally intends the afflictions of the godly, of which he treats there in that context. It may be extended also to all providential events; *Omnia quæcunque eis accedunt forinsecus, tam adversa, quam prospera:* All adverse and prosperous events of things without us, as Estius upon the place notes. Nothing is spoken of sin in this text. And the apostle distributing this general into particulars, ver. 38. plainly shews, what are the things he intended by his universal expression, ver. 28. as also in what respect no creature can do the saints any hurt, namely, that they shall never be able "to separate them from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." And in this respect it is true, that the sins of the elect shall not hurt them, by frustrating the purpose of God concerning their eternal salvation; or totally, and finally to separate them from his love. This we grant, and yet we think it a very unwary and unsound expression, *That believers need not fear their own sins, because they can do them no hurt:* It is too general and unguarded a proposition to be received for truth. What if their sins cannot do them hurt, to frustrate the purpose of God, and damn them to eternity in the world to come? Can it therefore do them no hurt at all in their present state of conflict with it in this world? For my part, I think the greatest fear of caution is due to sin, the greatest evil; and that Chrysostome spake more like a Christian, when he said, *Nil nisi peccatum timeo*, I fear nothing but sin. Though sin cannot finally ruin the believer, yet it can many ways hurt and injure the believer, and therefore ought not to be misrepresented as such an innocent and harmless thing to them. In vain are so many terrible threatenings in the scriptures against it, if it can do us no hurt; and it is certain nothing can do us good, but that which makes us

better and more holy: But ſin can never pretend to that of all things in the world. But to come to an iſſue, ſin may be conſidered three ways.

1. Formally. 2. Effectively. 3. Reductively.

Firſt, Formally, as a tranſgreſſion of the preceptive part of the law of God, and under that conſideration it is the moſt formidable evil in the whole world. The evil of evils, at which every gracious heart trembles, and ought rather to chuſe baniſhment, priſon and death itſelf in the moſt terrible form, than ſin, or that which is moſt tempting in ſin, the pleaſures of it; as Moſes did, Heb. xi. 25.

Secondly, Sin may be conſidered effectively, with reſpect to the manifold miſchiefs and calamities it produceth in the world, and the ſpiritual and corporeal evils it infers upon believers themſelves: Though it cannot damn their ſouls, yet it makes war againſt their ſouls, and brings them into miſerable bondage and captivity, Rom. vii. 23. It wounds their ſouls, under which wounds they are feeble and ſore broken; yea, they roar by reaſon of the diſquietneſs of their hearts, Pſal. xxxviii. 5, 8. Is war, captivity, feſtering, painful wounds, cauſing them to roar, no hurt to believers? It breaks their very bones, Pſal. li. 8. And is that no hurt? It draws of their minds from God, interrupts their prayers and meditations, Rom. vii. 18, 19, 20, 21. And is there no hurt in that? It cauſeth their graces to decline, wither, and languiſh to that degree, that the things which are in them are ready to die, Rev. iii. 1. and Rev. ii. 4. And is the loſs of grace and ſpiritual ſtrength, no hurt to a believer? It hides the face of God from them, Iſa. lix. 2. And is there no hurt in ſpiritual withdrawments of God from their ſouls? Why then do deſerted ſaints ſo bitterly lament and bemoan it? It provokes innumerable afflictions and miſeries, which fall upon our bodies, relations, eſtates; and if ſin be the cauſe of all theſe inward and outward miſeries to the people of God, ſure then there is ſome hurt in ſin, for which the ſaints ought to be afraid of it.

Thirdly, Sin may be conſidered reductively, as it is over-ruled, reduced, and finally iſſued by the covenant of grace. Under this conſideration of ſin, which rather reſpects the future, than preſent ſtate, the Antinomians only reſpect the hurt or evil of it; overlooking both the former conſiderations of ſin, which concern the preſent ſtate of believers, and ſo raſhly pronounce, Sin can do believers no hurt; an aſſertion tending to a great deal of looſeneſs and licentiouſneſs. A man drinks deadly poiſon, and is, after many months, recovered by the ſkill of an excellent

physician; shall we say, There was no hurt in it, because the man died not of it? Sure, those fearful twinges he felt, his loss of strength and stomach were hurtful to him, tho' he escaped with life, and got this advantage by it to be more wary for ever after. *Tantum religio potuit suadere malorum.*

And then, for other mens sins, (which, they say, we need not fear), it is an assertion against all the laws of charity; for the sins of wicked men eternally damn them, disturb the peace, and order of the world, draw down national judgments upon the whole community, cause wars, plagues, persecutions, *&c.* which considerations of the sins of others opened fountains of tears in David's eyes, Psal. cxix. 136. caused horror to take hold upon him, ver. 53. and yet, if you will believe the Antinomian doctrine, believers have no need to fear, much less to be in horror (which is the extremity of fear) for other mens sins. How is Satan gratified, and temptations to sin strengthened, upon the souls of men, by such indistinct, unwary, and dangerous expressions as these are? A good intention can be no sufficient salve for such assertions as these.

Secondly, They tell us, 'That as the saints need fear no sin 'for any hurt it can do them, so they must do no duty for their 'own *good*; or with an eye to their own salvation, or eternal 'rewards in heaven.'

Refutation. This, as the former, is too generally and indistinctly delivered. He that distinguisheth well, teacheth well. The confounding of things which ought to be distinguished, easily runs men into the bogs of errors. Two things ought to have been distinguished here:

1. Ends in duties.
2. Self-ends in duties.

First, *Ends in duties*; There are two ends in duties, one *supreme* and *ultimate*, *viz.* the glorifying of God, which must, and ought to take the first place of all other ends: Another *secondary* and *subordinate*, *viz.* the good and benefit of ourselves. To invert these, and place our own good in the room of God's glory, is sinful and unjustifiable; and he that aims only at himself in religion, is justly censured as a mercenary servant, especially, if it be any external good he aims at; but spiritual good, especially the enjoyment of God, is so involved in the other, *viz.* the glory of God, that no man can rightly take the Lord for his God, but he must take him for his supreme good, and, consequently, therein may, and must have a due respect to his own happiness.

Secondly, *Self-ends* muſt always be diſtinguiſhed into.

1. Corrupt, or carnal ſelf-ends.

2 Pure, and ſpiritual ſelf-ends.

As to carnal and corrupt ſelf-ends, inviting and moving men to the performance of religious duties; when theſe are the only ends men aim at, they bewray the hypocriſy of the heart, and, accordingly, God charges hypocriſy upon ſuch perſons. Hoſ. vii. 14. "They have not cried unto me with their heart, when "they howled upon their beds; They aſſemble themſelves for "corn, and wine," *&c.* God reckons not the moſt ſolemn duties animated by ſuch ends, to be done unto him. Zech. vii. 5. "Did ye at all faſt unto me?"

But, beſide theſe, man hath a *beſt ſelf*, a *ſpiritual ſelf*, to regard in duty, *viz.* The conformity of his ſoul to God in holineſs, and the perfect fruition of God in glory. Such holy ſelf-ends as theſe, are often commended, but no where condemned in ſcripture. 'Twas the encomium of Moſes, that "he had re-"ſpect unto the recompenſe of reward," Heb. xi. 26. Theſe ordinate reſpects to our ſpiritual, beſt ſelf, are ſo far from being our ſin, that God both appoints, and allows them for great uſes, and advantages to his people, in their way to glory. They are, (1.) Singular encouragements to the ſaints under perſecutions, ſtraits, and diſtreſſes, Heb. x. 34. and to that end Chriſt propoſes them, Luke xii. 32. and ſo the beſt of ſaints have made uſe of them, 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. (2.) They are motives, and incentives to praiſe, and thankfulneſs, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. Col. i. 12. (3.) They ſtir up the ſaints to chearful, and vigorous induſtry for God, Col. iii. 23, 24. 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Now to cut off from religion all theſe ſpiritual, and excellent ſelf-reſpects, and to make them our ſins, and marks of our hypocriſy, is an error very injurious to the goſpel, and to the ſouls of men. For, (1.) It croſſes the ſtrain of the goſpel, which commands us to ſtrive for our ſalvation, Luke xiii. 24, 25. Phil. ii. 12. 1 Tim. iv. 16. (2.) It blames that in the ſaints as ſinful, which the ſcripture notes as their excellency, and records to their praiſe, Heb. xi. 26. (3.) It makes the laws of Chriſtianity to thwart, and croſs the very fundamental law of our creation, which inclines, and obliges all men to intend their own felicity: And on this account, not only our Antinomians are blame-worthy, but others alſo, who are far enough from their opinion, who urge humiliation for ſin beyond the ſtaple; teaching men, they are not humbled enough, till they be content to be damned. (4.) It unreaſonably ſuppoſes a Chriſtian may not do that for his own ſoul, which he daily doth, and is

bound to do, for other men's souls, *viz.* to *pray*, *preach*, *exhort*, and *reprove* for their *salvation*.

Error IX. '*They will not allow the new covenant to be properly made with us, but with Christ for us.* * And some of them affirm, *That this covenant is all of it a promise, having no condition upon our part. They acknowledge, indeed, faith, repentance, and obedience, to be conditions, but say they are not conditions on our part, but on Christ's; and consequently affirm, that he repented, believed, and obeyed for us.*'

Refutation 1. The confounding of distinct covenants leads them into this error; we acknowledge there was a covenant properly made with Christ alone, which we call the *covenant of redemption*. This covenant, indeed, though it were made for us, yet it was not made with us: It had its condition, and that condition was laid only upon Christ, *viz.* That he should assume our nature, and pour out his soul unto death, which condition he was solely concerned to perform; but besides this, there is a *covenant of grace* made with him, and with all believers in him: with him *primarily*, as the head, with them as the members, who personally come into this covenant, when they come into the union with him by faith. This covenant of grace is not made with Christ alone, personally considered, but with Christ, and all that are his, mystically considered, and is properly made with all believers in Christ; and therefore it is called their covenant, Zech. ix. 11. "As for "thee, also, by the blood of thy covenant, I have sent forth thy "prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water." So when God entered into the covenant of grace with Abraham, Gen. xvii. 7. "I will establish my covenant (saith he) between me and "thee, and thy seed after thee." So when he took the people of Israel into this covenant, Ezek. xvi. 8. "I sware unto thee "(saith he) and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou "becamest mine."

This covenant of grace made with believers in Christ, is not the same, nor must it be confounded with the covenant of redemption made with Christ before the world began; they are two distinct covenants: For in the covenant of grace, into which believers are taken, there is a Mediator, and this Mediator is Christ himself. But in the other *covenant of redemption*, there neither was, nor could be any Mediator, which manifestly distinguishes them. Besides, in the covenant of grace, Christ bequeaths manifold, and rich legacies, as he is the Testator;

* *Vide* Saltmarsh of Free Grace, pag. 126, 127.

but no man gives a legacy to himſelf. This covenant is really, and properly made with every believer, as he is a member of Jeſus Chriſt, the head; and they are truly, and properly federates with God: The covenant binds them to their duties, and encourages them therein by promiſes of ſtrength, to be derived from Chriſt, to enable them thereunto.

2. We thankfully acknowledge, that the glory of the new covenant is chiefly diſcovered in the promiſes thereof; upon the beſt promiſes it is eſtabliſhed. And all the promiſes are reducible to the covenant. They meet, and center in it, as the rivers in the ſea, or beams in the ſun; but yet we cannot ſay, that nothing but promiſes is contained in this covenant: For there are duties required by it, as well as mercies promiſed in it.

Nor may we ſay, that thoſe duties required by it are required only to be performed by Chriſt, and not by us; but they are required to be performed by us in his ſtrength: Nor is it Chriſt that repents and believes for us, but we ourſelves are to believe, and repent in the ſtrength of his grace: And till we do ſo actually, in our own perſons, we have no part, or portion in the bleſſings, and mercies of this covenant. If Chriſt by believing for us, give us an actual right and title to the promiſes and bleſſings of the new covenant, then it will unavoidably follow:

(1.) That men, who never repented for one ſin in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly are pardoned as much as the greateſt penitents in the world; becauſe though they never repented themſelves, yet Chriſt repented for them; expreſly contrary to his own words, Luke xiii. 3. "Except ye repent, ye "ſhall all likewiſe periſh;" and contrary to his own eſtabliſhed order, Luke xxix. 47 Acts iii. 19.

(2.) It will alſo follow, that unbelievers, who never had union with Chriſt by one vital act of faith, in all their lives, may be, nay, certainly ſhall be ſaved, as well as thoſe that are actual believers: becauſe, though they be unbelievers in themſelves, yet Chriſt believed for them; expreſly contrary to Mark xvi. 16. "He that believeth not, ſhall be damned." John iii. 36. "He that believes not the Son, ſhall not ſee life; but the "wrath of God abideth on him." And Luke xii. 46. "He "will cut him in ſunder, and will appoint him his portion with "unbelievers."

(3.) It will alſo follow from hence, that men may continue in a ſtate of diſobedience all their days, and yet may be ſaved, as well as the moſt obedient ſouls in the world; expreſly con-

trary to Eph. v. 6. "Let no man deceive you with vain words; "for because of these things, cometh the wrath of God upon "the children of disobedience." And Rom. ii. 8. "But unto "them are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey "unrighteousness, indignation, and wrath." And 1 Pet. iv. 17. "What shall the end of them be that obey not the gospel "of God?"

This language sounds strange and harsh to the ears of Christians, a repenting Christ saving the impenitent sinner; a believing Christ saving unbelievers; an obeying Christ saving obstinate, and disobedient wretches: Whither doth such doctrine tend, but to encourage and fix men in their impenitence, unbelief, and disobedience? But the Lord grant no poor sinner in the world may trust to this, or build his hopes of eternal life upon such a loose, sandy foundation, as this is. Reader, all that Christ hath done without thee, will not, cannot be effectual to thy salvation, unless repentance, faith, and obedience, be wrought by the Spirit in thy soul. It is "Christ "in thee, that is the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. beware, therefore, on what ground thou buildest for eternity.

Error 10. '*They deny sanctification to be the evidence of justification, and deridingly tell us, this is to light a candle to the sun; and the darker our sanctification is, the brighter our justification is.*'

Refutation. I am not at all surprised at this strange and abfonous language; it is a false, and dangerous conclusion, yet such as naturally results from, and, by a kind of necessity, follows out of their other errors: For if the elect be all justified from eternity, and that neither repentance, faith, or obedience, be required of us in the covenant of grace; but were all required of, and performed by Christ, who repented, believed, and obeyed for us; then, indeed, I cannot understand what relation our sanctification hath to our justification, or how it should be an evidence, mark, or sign thereof, or what regard is due from Christians to any grace, or work of the Spirit wrought in them, to clear up their interest in Christ to them. For we being in Christ, and in a state of justification, before we were naturally born, we must necessarily be so before we be regenerated, or new-born: and, consequently, no work of grace wrought in us, or holy duties performed by us, can be evidential of that which from eternity was done before them, and without them.

1. I grant, indeed, That many vain professors do cheat, and

deceive themſelves, by falſe, unſcriptural ſigns, and evidences, as well as by true ones miſapplied.

2. I grant alſo, That by reaſon of the deceitfulneſs of the heart, inſtability of the thoughts, ſimilar works of common grace in hypocrites, diſtractions of the world, wiles of Satan, weakneſs of grace, and prevalency of corruptions: The clearing up of our juſtification by our ſanctification, is a work that meets with great, and manifold difficulties, which are the things that moſt Chriſtians complain of.

3. I alſo grant, That the evidence of our ſanctification in this, or any other method, is not eſſential, and abſolutely neceſſary to the being of a Chriſtian. A man may live in Chriſt, and yet not know his intereſt in him, or relation to him, Iſa. l. 10. Some Chriſtians, like children in the cradle, live, but underſtand not that they live; are born to a great inheritance, but have no knowledge of it, or preſent comfort in it.

4. I will further grant, That the eye of a Chriſtian may be too intently fixed upon his own gracious qualifications; and being wholly taken up in the reflex acts of faith, may too much neglect the direct acts of faith upon Chriſt, to the great detriment of his ſoul.

But all this notwithſtanding, The examination of our juſtification by our ſanctification, is not only a lawful, and poſſible, but a very excellent and neceſſary work and duty. It is the courſe that Chriſtians have taken in all ages, and that which God hath abundantly bleſſed to the joy and encouragement of their ſouls.

He hath furniſhed our ſouls to this end with noble, ſelf-reflecting powers and abilities. He hath anſwerably furniſhed his word with variety of marks and ſigns for the ſame end and uſe. Some of theſe marks are *excluſive*, to detect and bar bold preſumptuous pretenders, 1 Cor. vi. 9. Rev. xxi. 8, 27. Some are *inclusive* marks, to meaſure the ſtrength and growth of grace by, Rom. iv. 20. And others are *poſitive* ſigns, flowing out of the very eſſence of grace, or the new creature, 1 John iv. 13. "Hereby we "know that we dwell in him, and he in us, becauſe he hath "given us of his Spirit."

He hath alſo expreſly commanded us to examine and prove ourſelves; upbraided the neglecters of that duty, and enforced their duty upon them by a thundering argument, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. "Examine yourſelves whether ye be in the faith, prove your own "ſelves; know you not your own ſelves, how that Jeſus Chriſt "is in you, except ye be reprobates." In a word, for this end and purpoſe, amongſt others were the ſcriptures written, 1 John

v. 13. "These things have I written to you, that believe on "the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have "eternal life." And therefore, to neglect this duty is exceeding dangerous; but to deny and deride it, intolerable. It may be justly feared, such men will be drowned in perdition, who fall into the waters, by making a bridge over them with their own shadows.

For my own part, I verily believe, that the sweetest hours Christians enjoy in this world, are when they retire into their closets, and sit there concealed from all eyes, but him that made them; looking now into the *bible*, then into their own *hearts*, and then up to *God*; closely following the grand debate about their interest in Christ, till they have brought it to the happy desired issue.

And now, reader, for a close of all, I call the Searcher of hearts to witness, 'That I have not intermeddled with these 'controversies of Antipaedo-baptism, and Antinomianism, out of 'any delight I take in prolemical studies, or an unpeaceable con-'tradicting humour, but out of pure zeal for the glory, and 'truths of God; for the vindication, and defence whereof, I 'have been necessarily engaged therein. And having dis-'charged my duty thus far, I now resolve to return (if God 'will permit me) to my much sweeter, and more agreeable 'studies; still maintaining my Christian charity for those whom 'I oppose; not doubting but I shall meet those in heaven, from 'whom I am forced, in lesser things, to dissent and differ upon 'earth.'

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GOSPEL-UNITY

Recommended to the

CHURCHES of CHRIST.

A SERMON.

1 Cor. i. 10. *Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment.*

WHEN I consider this healing and uniting text, and the scandalous divisions of the congregations to which I re-

commend it; I could chuse rather to comment thereon, with tears, than words: It is just matter of lamentation, to think what feeble influences such divine and pathetical exhortations have, upon the minds and hearts of professed Christians. But it is not lamentations, but proper counsels, and convictions obeyed, must do the work.

The primitive, and purest churches of Christ, consisted of imperfect members, who, notwithstanding they were knit together by the same internal bond of the Spirit, and the same external bonds of common profession, and common danger, and enjoyed extraordinary helps for uniting, in the presence and doctrine of the apostles among them; yet quickly discovered a schismatical spirit, dividing both in judgment and affection, to the great injury of religion, and grief of the apostles spirits. To check and heal this growing evil in the church at Corinth, the apostle addresses his pathetical exhortation to them, and to all future churches of Christ, whom it equally concerns, in the words of my text; *Now I beseech you, brethren,* &c. Where note,

1. The duty exhorted to,

2. The arguments enforcing the duty.

1. The duty exhorted to, namely, unity; the beauty, strength, and glory, as well as the duty of a church. This unity he describes two ways, 1. As it is exclusive of its opposite, schism, or division: all rents, and rash separations, are contrary to it, and destructive of it; *I beseech you, brethren, that there be no divisions* [or schisms] *among you.* 2. As it is inclusive of all that belongs to it, namely the harmony and agreement of their judgments, hearts, and language. (1.) That ye all speak the same thing. (2.) That ye be perfectly joined together in one mind. And, (3.) In the same judgment. This threefold union in judgment, affection, and language, includes all that belongs to Christian concord, makes the saints Συμψυχοι, men of one heart and soul, the loveliest sight this world affords, Acts iv. 46, 47.

2. The arguments enforcing this duty upon them, come next under consideration. And these are three; (1.) *I beseech you.* (2.) I beseech you, *brethren.* (3.) I beseech you, brethren, *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* These arguments are not of equal force and efficacy; the first is great, the second greater; the last the most efficacious and irresistible of all the rest: but all together should come with such power, and irresistible efficacy, upon the judgments, consciences, and hearts of Christians, as should perfectly knit them together, and defeat all the de-

figns of Satan, and his agents without them, or of their own corruptions within them, to rend asunder their affections, or communion.

Argum. 1. And first, he enforces the duty of unity by a solemn, apostolical obsecration, and adjuration, *I beseech* you, saith he; he had power to command them to this duty, and threaten them for the neglect of it: He had in readiness to revenge all disobedience, and might have shaken that rod over them; but he chuseth rather to intreat, and beseech them: Now I *beseech* you, brethren; here you have, as it were, the great apostle upon his knees before them, meekly, and pathetically intreating them to be at perfect unity among themselves. It is the intreaty of their spiritual father, that had begotten them to Christ. Now [I] beseech you, brethren: I, who was the instrument in Christ's hands of your conversion to him; I, that have planted you a gospel-church, and assiduously watered you; I beseech you all, by the spiritual ties, and endearments betwixt you and me, that there be no divisions among you. This is the first argument, wrapt up in a solemn obsecration.

Next, he enforces the duty of unity, by the nearness of their relation; I beseech you, *brethren:* Brotherhood is an endearing thing, and naturally draws affection, and unity with it, 1 Pet. iii. 8. "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of ano-"ther; love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous; ye are the "children of one Father, joint-heirs of one and the same in-"heritance." To see an Egyptian smiting an Israelite, is no strange sight; but to see one Israelite quarreling with another, is most unnatural, and uncomely: The nearer the relation, the stronger the affection. "How good, and how pleasant is it "(saith the Psalmist) for brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psal. cxxxiii. 1.

But the greatest argument of all, is the last, *viz. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.* In this name he beseeches, and intreats them to be at perfect unity among themselves. In the former he sweetly insinuated the duty, by a loving *compellation,* but here he sets it home by a solemn *adjuration;* I beseech you, brethren, *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ:* That is to say, 1. For Christ's sake, or for the love of Christ; by all that Christ hath done, suffered, or purchased for you; and as Christ is dear, and precious to you, let there be no divisions. If you have any love for Christ, do not grieve him, and obstruct his great design in the world, by your scandalous schisms. Mr.

John Fox never denied a beggar that asked an alms of him, for Christ Jesus sake

2. *In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, that is, in the authority of Christ; for so his name, also, signifies, 1 Cor. 5. 4. and it is as if he had said, If you reverence the supreme authority, and sovereignty of Christ, which is the fountain out of which so many solemn commands of unity do flow; then see, as you will answer him at the great day, that ye be perfectly joined together in one mind, and in one judgment. The point will be this.

Doct. *Unity amongst believers, especially in particular church-relation, is as desirable a mercy, as it is a necessary, and indispensable duty.*

How desirable a mercy it is, and how necessary a duty, let the same apostle, who presseth it upon the Corinthians in my text, be heard again, enforcing the same duty with the same warmth, upon the church at Philippi, chap. ii. ver. 1, 2. "If "there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort "of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of "mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the "same love, being of one accord, of one mind." In handling this point, I will shew,

1. What unity among believers is.
2. How the necessity, and desirableness of it, may be evinced.
3. And then lay down the motives, and directions about it.

(1.) What unity amongst believers is, and more particularly such believers as stand in particular church-relation to each other.

There is a twofold union, one *mystical*, betwixt Christ and believers; another *moral*, betwixt believers themselves: faith knits them all to Christ, and then love knits them one to another. Their common relation to Christ, their head, endears them to each other, as fellow members in the same body: hence they become *sanguine Christi conglutinati*, glued together by the blood of Christ. Union with Christ is fundamental to all union among the saints. Perfect union would flow from this their common union with Christ, their head, were they not here in an imperfect state, where their corruptions disturb and hinder it; and as soon as they shall attain unto complete sanctification, they shall also attain unto perfect unity. How their unity with one another comes, by way of necessary resultancy, from their union with Christ, and how this unity among themselves shall at last arise to its just perfection, that one text plainly dis-

covers, John xvii. 23. "I in them, and thou in me; that they "may be made perfect in one," &c.

Unity amongſt thoſe that hold not the head, is rather a conſpiracy, than a goſpel-unity. Believers, and unbelievers, may have a political, or civil union; but there's no ſpiritual unity, but what flows from joint-membership in Chriſt. I will not deny, but, in particular churches, there may be, and ſtill are ſome hypocrites, who hold communion with the ſaints, and pretend to belong unto Chriſt, the ſame head with them; but as they have no real union with Chriſt, ſo neither have they any ſincere affection to the ſaints; and theſe, for the moſt part, are they that raiſe tumults and diviſions in the church, as diſloyal ſubjects do in the commonwealth. Of theſe the apoſtle ſpeaks, 1 John ii. 19. "They went out from us, but they were not of "us; for if they had been of us, they would, no doubt, have "continued with us; but they went out, that it might be "made manifeſt they were not all of us."

Sincere Chriſtianity holds faſt the ſoul by a firm bond of life to the truly Chriſtian community, wherein they reap thoſe ſpiritual pleaſures and advantages, which aſſure their continuance therein to a great degree: but thoſe that join with the church, upon carnal, and external inducements, make little conſcience of rending from it; and God permits their ſchiſmatical ſpirits thus to act, for the diſcovering of their hypocriſy, or (as the text ſpeaks) "that it might be made manifeſt they were not of "us;" as alſo, that they which are approved, may, by their conſtancy, be alſo made manifeſt, 1 Cor. xi. 19.

It hath, indeed, been ſaid, that it is never better with the church, than when there are moſt hypocrites in it; but then you muſt underſtand it only with reſpect to the external tranquillity, and proſperity of the church: For as to its real ſpiritual advantage, they add nothing. And therefore it behoves church-officers, and members, to be exceeding careful (eſpecially in times of liberty, and proſperity) how they admit members, as the Jews in Solomon's time were of admitting proſelytes. 'Tis ſaid, Amos iii. 3. "How can two walk together, except "they be agreed?" I deny not, but perſons that differ in ſome leſſer points, as to their judgment, may, and ought to be one in affection; but of this I am ſure, that when ſanctified perſons, agreed in judgments and principles, do walk together under pious and judicious church-officers, in tender affection, and the exerciſe of all duties tending to mutual edification, glorifying God with one mouth, Rom. xv. 6. and cleaving together with oneneſs of heart, Acts ii. 42. This is ſuch a church-unity, as

anſwers Chriſt's end in the inſtitution of particular churches, and greatly tends to their own comfort, and the propagation of Chriſtianity in the world. Tongue-unity flows from heart-unity; heart-unity, in a great meaſure, from head-unity; and all three from union with the Lord Jeſus Chriſt. The diviſions of our tongues come moſtly from the diviſions of our hearts; were hearts agreed, tongues would quickly be agreed; and then what bleſſed times might be expected? And ſo much briefly for the nature of unity. Next,

(2.) Let us evince, both the neceſſity and deſirableneſs of this unity among believers, and this will appear in a threefold reſpect; *viz.*

1. With reſpect to the glory of God.
2. The comfort and benefit of our own ſouls.
3. The converſion and ſalvation of the world.

(1.) With reſpect to the glory of God. The manifeſtative glory of God (which is all the glory we are capable of giving him, is the very end of our being, and ſhould be dearer to us than our lives) is exceedingly advanced by the unity of his people. Hence is the apoſtle's prayer, Rom. xv. 5, 6. "Now "the God of patience, and conſolation, grant you to be like "minded one towards another, according to Chriſt Jeſus, that "you may with one mind, and one mouth glorify God." 'Tis highly remarkable, that the apoſtle, in this petition for the unity of the ſaints, doth not only deſcribe that unity he prays for, one mouth, and one mind, and ſhews how much God would be glorified by ſuch an union; but he alſo addreſſes himſelf to God for it, under theſe two remarkable titles, the *God of patience and conſolation*: thereby intimating two things, (1.) How great need, and exerciſe, there is of patience in maintaining unity among the ſaints: They muſt bear one another's buthens; they muſt give allowance for mutual infirmities, for the church here is not an aſſembly of ſpirits of juſt men made perfect. The unity of the ſaints therefore greatly depends upon the exerciſe of patience one toward another; and this he begs *the God of patience* to give them. And to endear this grace of patience to them, He (2.) joins with it another title of God, *viz.* the *God of conſolation*, wherein he points them to that abundant comfort which would reſult unto themſelves from ſuch a bleſſed unity, continued and maintained, by the mutual exerciſes of patience and forbearance, one towards another. And to ſet home all, he lays before them the pattern and example of Chriſt: *The God of patience and conſolation grant you to be like-minded, according to Chriſt.* How many thouſand infirmities and failures

a duty, doth Chriſt find in all his people; notwithſtanding which, he maintaineth union and communion with them; and if they, after his example, ſhall do ſo likewiſe with one another, God will be eminently glorified therein. This will evidence both the truth and excellency of the Chriſtian religion, which ſo firmly knits the hearts of its profeſſors together.

(2.) The neceſſity and deſirableneſs of this unity farther appears, by the deep intereſt that the comfort and benefit of our ſouls have in it. A great example hereof we have in Acts. ii. 46, 47. Oh! what cheerineſs, ſtrength and pleaſure, did the primitive Chriſtians reap from the unity of their hearts in the ways and worſhip of God? Next unto the pleaſure and delight of immediate communion with God himſelf, and the ſhedding abroad of his love into our hearts by the Holy Ghoſt; none like that which ariſeth from the harmonious exerciſes of the graces of the ſaints, in their mutual duties and communions one with another. How are their ſpirits dilated and refreſhed by it? What a lively emblem is here of heaven! the courts of princes afford no ſuch delights. Whereas on the other ſide, when ſchiſms have rent churches aſunder, they go away from each other exaſperated, grieved, and wounded, crying out, Oh, that I had a cottage in the wilderneſs! or, Oh, that I had the wings of a dove, that I might flee away, and be at reſt.

(3.) *Laſtly*, The neceſſity, and deſirableneſs, of this union further appears with reſpect unto the world, who are allured unto Chriſt by it, and ſcared off from religion by the feuds and diviſions of profeſſors. To this the prayer of Chriſt hath reſpect, John xvii. 23. "That they may be made perfect in one, that "the world may know that thou haſt ſent me," *q. d.* This, O Father, will be a convincing evidence to the world, of the divinity both of my perſon and doctrine, and a great ordinance for their converſion to me, when they ſhall ſee my people cleaving inſeparably unto me by faith, and to one another by love. And, on the other ſide, it will be a fatal ſtumbling block in the way of their converſion, to obſerve my followers biting and devouring, rending and tearing one another.

A learned and judicious divine † commenting upon thoſe words, Cant. ii. 7. "I charge you, O ye daughters of Jeruſa-"lem, by the roes, and by the hinds of the field, that ye ſtir "not up, nor awake my Love till he pleaſe;" gives the ſenſe thus; By roes and hinds of the field (ſaith he) underſtand weak

† *Mr. J. Cotton.*

comers on towards Christ, persons under some preparatory works towards conversion, who are as shy and as timorous as roes and hinds of the field: and as they will be scared by the yelp of a dog, or sound of a gun; so will these at any offensive miscarriages in the churches of Christ.

Alexander Severus, finding two Christians contending with one another, commanded them that they should not presume to take the name of Christ upon them any longer; for (saith he) you greatly dishonour your master, whose disciples you profess yourselves to be. And thus briefly of the nature of church-unity, and the necessity and desirableness thereof, among all that stand in that relation.

Use. The only improvement I shall make of this point, shall be for,

1. Exhortation to unity.
2. Directions for the maintaining of it.

The first use, for exhortation.

Use 1. And first, having briefly discoursed of the nature, necessity, and desirableness of unity among all Christians, and especially of those in particular church-relation, I do in the bowels of Christ, and in the words of his apostle, Phil. ii. 1, 2, earnestly and humbly intreat all my brethren, "That if there "be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any "fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels of mercy, fulfil ye my "joy; that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of "one accord, of one mind." He speaketh not as one doubting, but as one disputing, when he saith, *If there be any consolation in Christ:* And it is as if he had said, I passionately and earnestly intreat you by all that comfort and joy you have found in your mutual communion from Christ, and his ordinances, wherein you have comfortably walked together, by all that comfort resulting from the mutual exercises and fruits of christian love; by the unspeakable joys and delights the Spirit of God hath shed down upon you, whilst you walked in unity, in the ways of your duty; by all the bowels of compassion and mercy you have for yourselves, for your brethren, or for the poor carnal world, who are in hazard of being destroyed by your divisions: Or, for *me*, your minister, whose joy and comfort is bound up in your unity and stability; "That ye be like-minded, having the same love, "being of one accord, of one mind." What heart that hath one spark of the love of Christ in it, yields not to such an exhortation as this, enforced by "the consolation of Christ, com-"fort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, and bowels of mercy?" More particularly, suffer ye this word of exhortation from the

consideration of the following arguments, or motives, what distances soever you are at from one another.

" *Motive* 1. Reflect upon the late long and continued troubles you have been under, as the just rebukes of God for your former contentions and follies.

I need not tell you, you are but lately plucked as brands out of the burning, and that the smell of fire is yet upon you. The time lately was, when you got your bread with the perils of your lives; when God handed it to you behind your enemies backs; when your eyes did not, could not behold your former teachers, except in corners or prisons, when your souls were sorrowful for the solemn assemblies; when you mournfully confessed before the Lord, that these were the just and deserved punishments for your wantonness, barrenness, and provoking animosities. These things were not only the matter of your humble confessions; but the reformation of those evils was what you solemnly promised the Lord, when he should again restore you to your liberty. What! and is the rod no sooner off your backs, but you will to the old work again? Read Ezra ix. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. and view the face of this sin in that glass. Have we been so many years in the furnace, and our dross not purged? Such sharp and long continued afflictions produce no better effects? It may be said of our troubles, as of the siege of Tyrus, Ezek. xxix. 18. " Every head was made bald, and " every shoulder peeled." Some of us went young men into persecution and trouble, and are come forth old; and, which is worst of all, we bring our old corruptions forth with us. Either we did confess and bewail these sins in the days of our affliction, or we did not. If we did not, we were incorrigible, and defeated the design of the rod. If we did, our confessions and sorrow were either sincere or hypocritical: If sincere, certainly they would effectually caution us, that we return not again to folly, Ezra ix. 13, 14. " After all that is come upon " us for our evil deeds, and for our great trespass, seeing that " thou, our God, hast punished us less than our iniquities de- " serve; and hast given us such a deliverance as this; should " we again break thy commandment?"

Motive 2. Consider the common imminent danger that now threatens us, both from enemies upon our borders, and within our own bowels. The Canaanites are in the land, let there be no strife therefore betwixt brethren; our natural, civil, and spiritual comforts are all shaking and trembling about us. If wanton children fall out and quarrel at a full table, our eye-

mies ſtand ready to take away the cloth. They are not ſo far from us, and out of ſight, but God can call them in a few hours to end the ſtrife amongſt us. We act not only beneath the rules of religion, but of reaſon alſo. Brute creatures will depoſe their antipathies in a common danger. Mr. Thomas Fuller, in his *Hiſtory of the Worthies of* England, tells us, That when the Severn ſea overflowed the lower grounds of Somerſetſhire, it was obſerved, that dogs, and hares, and cats, and rats, ſwimming to the burroughs and hills to preſerve their lives, ſtood quiet during the flood; not offering the leaſt injury one to another. 'Tis pity that ſenſe ſhould do more with beaſts, than reaſon and religion with men.

Motive 3. Reflect upon the ſcandal your diviſions give to the world; how it hardens and prejudices them againſt religion and reformation. And thus the ſouls of men are eternally hazarded by the follies of profeſſors: They are ready enough to take occaſions againſt religion, where none are given, and much more to improve them where occaſions are given. "Woe "unto the world (ſaith Chriſt) becauſe of offences: for it muſt "needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom "the offence cometh," Matth. xviii. 7. The woe is not only denounced againſt the taker, but the giver of the offence. It finds ſuch prejudices in the hearts of carnal men, that ſome of them will never have good thoughts of religion any more: but utterly diſtaſte and nauſeate thoſe aſſemblies and ordinances from which their converſion may, with greateſt probability, be expected.

How long, and how anxiouſly have we prayed, and waited for ſuch a day of goſpel-liberty as we now enjoy? It hath been one of the ſoreſt afflictions we have grappled with in the days of our reſtraint, that we could not ſpeak unto the carnal world. If we had opportunity to ſpeak at all, it was for the moſt part to ſuch as ſtood in need of edification more than of converſion. God hath now, beyond the thoughts of moſt hearts, opened to us a door of liberty to preach, and for all, that will, to hear. Some fruits we have already ſeen, and more we expect. The children are as it were coming to the birth, and will you obſtruct it? Will you give the goſpel a miſcarrying womb? Be inſtruments at once, by your contentions, to deſtroy the ſouls of men, and break the very hearts of your miniſters, whoſe greateſt comfort is bound up in the ſucceſs of their labours? Brethren, I beſeech you read theſe words as if they were delivered to you upon my bended knees; I beſeech you for the Lord Jeſus Chriſt's ſake, and for the hope's ſake of ſaving the precious immortal ſouls of men; and for your poor miniſters

ke, who have scarce any thing besides the fruits of their labours, to recompence their long continued and grievous sufferings, depose your animosities, maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace; help us, but do not hinder us in our hard labours. What good will our lives do us, if we must labour in vain, and spend our strength for nought? We find it difficult enough to persuade sinners to come unto Christ, when no such stumbling-blocks are laid in the way; the counter-pleas of Satan, the unbelief and sensuality of unsanctified nature, are difficulties too great for us to grapple with; but if to these must be added prejudices against religion, from your dividing lusts, and scandalous breaches, what hope then remains? If you have no pity for yourselves, pity perishing souls, and pity your poor discouraged ministers; have a care you make us not to groan to God against you; or if that be a small thing in your eyes, have a care lest the blood of souls be charged to your account in the great day. Are there none in the towns or neighbourhoods where you live? Are you sure there are none that have hopeful inclinations towards religion? Desires and purposes to attend on the same means of grace you sit under, who will charge the occasion of their damnation upon you at the bar of Christ, and say, Lord, we had some weak convictions upon our consciences, that we needed a rouzing and searching minister; we were convinced that the profane and carnal world, among whom we had our conversation, were not in the right path that leadeth to salvation! We felt in ourselves inclinations to cast off our old companions, and associate with those that professed more strictness and holiness, and place ourselves under the most fruitful and advantageous ministry, and accordingly improved opportunities to get acquaintance with them; but when we came nearer to them, we found such wrath and envy, such wranglings and divisions, such undermining and supplanting each others reputations; such whisperings and tale-bearings, such malicious aggravations and improvements of common failings and infirmities, such covetousness and worldliness, such pride and vanity, as gave us such a disgust and offence at the ways of reformation, that we could never more be reconciled to them. Beware, I say, how you incur the guilt of such a dreadful charge as this, by giving liberty to such lusts and passions, under a profession of religion, and pretence to reformation.

Motive 4. Consider the contrariety of such practices to that solemn and fervent prayer of Jesus Christ, recorded in John xvii.

'Tis highly remarkable, how in that prayer, which he poured out a little before his death, with such a mighty *pathos*, and fervency of spirit, he insists upon nothing more than unity among his people. He returns upon his Father again and again, for the obtaining of this one thing: Four times doth he beg for unity among them, and every time he seems to rise higher and higher, beseeching his Father, (1.) That they may be one. (2.) That they may be one in us. (3.) That they may be one, as thou and I are one. And, lastly, that they may be made perfect in one. By all this shewing how intent his Spirit was upon this one thing.

Brethren, if you would study how to frustrate the design, and grieve the heart of your Lord Jesus Christ (to whom you profess love and obedience) you cannot take a readier way to do it, than by breaking the bonds of unity among yourselves. I beseech you, therefore, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath so earnestly prayed for the unity of his people, *That ye be perfectly joined together in one heart, and in one mind*, as the text speaks.

Motive 5. Consider how directly your divisions cross, and frustrate the design and end of church-fellowship, which is instituted for the improvement of each other's graces, and helping on the mortification of each other's corruptions.

God hath distributed variety of gifts and graces, in different degrees, amongst his people; the improvement of these gifts and graces to the glory of God, and our mutual edification, is the very scope and end of particular church-fellowship and communion: Every man hath his proper gift of God, and (as a late † worthy notes) the gifts and graces of all, are this way made useful and beneficial. Job was exemplary for plainness and patience; Moses for faithfulness and meekness; Josiah for tenderness and a melting spirit; Athanasius was prudent and active; Basil heavenly, and of a sweet spirit; Chrysostom laborious, and without affectation; Ambrose resolved and grave: One hath quickness of parts, but not so solid a judgment; another is solid, but not ready and presential; one hath a good wit, another a better memory, a third excels them both in utterance; one is zealous, but ungrounded; another well principled, but timorous; one is wary and prudent; another open and plain hearted; one is trembling and melting; another chearful and full of comfort. Now the end and use of church-fellowship, is to make a rich improvement unto all, by a regular use and exercise of the gifts and graces found in every

† Torshell's Help to Christian Fellowship, p. 6, 7.

one. One must impart his light, and another his warmth; the eye (*viz.* the knowing man) cannot say to the hand (*viz.* the active man) I have no need of thee: Unspeakable are the benefits resulting from spiritual, and orderly communion; but whatever the benefits be, they are all cut off by schisms, and dissentions; for as faith is the grace by which we receive all from God, so love is the grace by which we share and divide the comfort of all among ourselves. The excellent things of the spirit are lodged in earthen vessels, which death will shortly break, and then we can have no more benefit by them; but these jars, and divisions, render saints, as it were, dead one to another, whilst they are alive. Ah, how lovely, how sweet, and desirable it is, to live in the communion of such saints as are described, Mal. iii. 16. to hear them freely, and humbly to open their hearts and experiences to one another! After this manner, some say, the art of medicine was found out; as any one met with an herb, and discovered the virtue of it by an accident, he was to post it up, and so the physician's skill was perfected, by a collection of those posted experiments. But woe to us! we are ready to post up each other's fallings and infirmities, to the shame and reproach of religion, and to furnish our common enemies with matter of contempt and scorn against us all.

Motive 6. In a word, These schisms and dissentions, in the churches of Christ, are omnious presages, and foreboding signs of some sweeping judgment, and common calamity near approaching us. It is a common observation with shepherds, that when the sheep push one another, a storm speedily ensues. I am sure it is so here; if God turn not our hearts one towards another, he will come and smite the earth with a curse, Mal. iv. 6. I believe it, sirs, you will have other work to do shortly; there be those coming (if God prevent not) that will part the fray.

Use second, for direction.

Use 2. In the last place, therefore, give me leave to lay before you some necessary, and proper directions and counsels, for the prevention and healing of schisms, and divisions amongst the churches of Christ: For it is not complaints and lamentations, but proper counsels and directions, and those not only prescribed, but obeyed that must do the work. When Joshua lay upon his face before the Lord, Josh. vii. 8, 9, 10. bewailing the sins and miseries of Israel; *Up* (saith God) *sanctify the people: wherefore liest thou upon thy face?* As if he should say, thy moans and lamentations are good and necessary, in their place; but speedy action, and vigorous endeavours, must be also used, or Israel will perish. So say I, Up, up, fall speedily to your duties, as

men in earneſt; and for your guidance in the paths of duty, I will lay before you the following plain and neceſſary directions.

Direction 1. The orderly gathering, and filling particular churches, is of great influence to the peace and tranquillity of thoſe churches; and therefore it greatly concerns all that are intereſted therein, eſpecially ſuch as are veſted with office-power, to beware whom they receive into their communion.

The ſcriptures do plainly diſcover to us, that church-members ought to be viſible ſaints, 1 Cor. i. 2. 2 Cor. i. 1, 2. Acts ii. 41. to the end; Eph. ii. 7. 1 Theſ. i. 2, 3. Rom. i. 7. Col i. 2. Hence particular Churches are called the churches of the ſaints, 1 Cor. xiv. 33. If admiſſions be lax, and negligent, ſo much heterogenous matter fills the church, that it can never be quiet. Chriſtians, and Chriſtians, may live together harmoniouſly, and coaleſce in one orderly, and comfortable ſociety, as having one and the ſame Head, one Spirit, the ſame general deſign and end: But godly and ungodly, ſpiritual and carnal, are acted by contrary principles, purſue oppoſite deſigns, and can never heartily coaleſce. There is a ſpirit of diſcerning, a judgment of diſcretion in the ſaints, and it is eſpecially deſirable in a more eminent degree, in thoſe that have office-power in the church, to judge of men's fit qualifications for church communion. We all allow, that groſs ignorance and prophaneneſs are juſt bars to mens admiſſion; and to deny this, were to take all power from the church to preſerve the purity of God's ordinances, or to caſt out notorious offenders. None ought to be admitted into church communion, but ſuch as do appear to the judgment of charity (comparing their profeſſions and converſations) to be Chriſtians indeed, that is, men fearing God, and working righteouſneſs.

And I make no doubt, but ſome opinions, as well as practices, render men unmeet for church communion, Titus iii. 10. 2 John 10. All opinions which overthrow doctrines neceſſary to be believed, which the apoſtle comprehends under the name of faith; and all ſuch opinions as are inconſiſtent with an holy life, and overthrow the power of godlineſs, which the apoſtle comprehends under the name of a good conſcience, 1 Tim. i. 19, 20. whoſoever ſhall hold or maintain any ſuch opinions as theſe, he is either to be kept out, if not admitted; or caſt out, if he be in church-fellowſhip. In receiving ſuch, you receive but ſpies, and incendiaries, among you. What a firebrand did Arius prove, not only in the church of Conſtantinople, but even to the whole world? Men of graceleſs hearts, and erroneous heads, will give a continual exerciſe to the patience of ſober Chriſtians.

I deny not, but out of the purest Churches, men may arise, speaking perverse things, and yet the officers and members of those churches, be blameless in their admission; but if they can be discerned before they be admitted, a little preventive care would be of singular and seasonable use, to the tranquillity of church-societies.

Direction 2. Let all officers and members of the church, study their duties, and keep themselves within the bounds of their proper places; ordinate motions are quiet motions. 1 Thes. iv. 11. "Study to be quiet and do your own business, "and work with your own hands, as we commanded you." In which words he condemns two vices, which disturb, and distract the church of Christ, *viz.* curiosity in matters which pertain not to us, and idleness in the duties of our particular callings. Two things I shall drop, by way of caution:

(1.) Let it be for a caution to ministers, that they mind their proper work, study the peace of the church, impartially dispense their respects to the saints committed to their charge, not siding with a party. There be few schisms in churches, in which ministers have not some hand. Jerome upon those words, Hosea ix. 8. hath this memorable note; *Veteres scrutans historias, invenire non possum scidisse ecclesiam, praeter eos qui sacerdotes a Deo positi fuerunt.* Searching the ancient histories (saith he) I can find none that hath more rent the church of God, than those that sustain the office of ministers. This is a sad charge, and it is too justly laid upon many of that order. Oh what a blessing is a prudent, patient, peaceable minister, to the flock over which he watches! *

(2.) Let the people keep their places, and study their proper duties. There be in most congregations, some idle people, who having little to do at home, are employed upon Satan's errands, to run from house to house, carrying tales to exasperate one Christian against another. These the apostle particularly marks and warns the churches of, 1 Tim. v. 13. "And "withal they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to "house; and not only idle, but tatlers also, and busy bodies, "speaking things which they ought not." If that one rule of Christ; Matth. xviii. 15, 16. were conscientiously, and strictly attended to, to tell a trespassing brother his fault privately, then with one or two more, if obstinacy make it necessary, and not to expose him to the whole church, and much less to the whole world, without a plain necessity; how many thousand ruptures

* From vain-glorious doctors, contentious pastors, and unprofitable questions, the good Lord deliver us. *Luther's prayer.*

would be prevented in Christian societies? But instead of regularly admonishing and reproving those irregular and idle tatlers, (as the apostle calls them) who make it their business to sow jealousies, to make and widen breaches amongst brethren.

Direction 3. Let all Christians govern their tongues, and keep them under the command of the law of kindness in their mutual converses with one another. "A soft answer" (saith Solomon) Prov. xv. 1. "turneth away wrath; but grievous words "stir up anger." Hard to hard will never do well. How easily did Abigail disarm angry David by a gentle apology? What more boisterous than the wind? Yet a gentle rain will allay it. It may be strongly presumed, that a meek and gentle answer, will more easily allay the passions of a godly man, than of one that is both ungodly, and full of enmity towards us; and yet sometimes it hath done the latter. A company of vain, wicked men, having inflamed their blood in a tavern at Bolton in New-England, and seeing that reverend, meek and holy minister of Christ, Mr. Cotton, coming along the street, one of them tells his companions, "I'll go (saith he) and put a trick upon the "old Cotton." Down he goes, and crossing his way, whispers these words into his ear, "Cotton (said he) thou art an old "fool." Mr. Cotton replied, "I confess I am so; the Lord "make both me and thee wiser than we are, even wise to sal-"vation." He relates this passage to his wicked companions, which cast a great damp upon their spirits, in the midst of a frolic. What peaceful societies should we have, if our lips transgressed not the laws of love and kindness.

Direction 4. Respectful deportments to those that are beneath us in gifts, or estates, is an excellent conservative of church-peace; lofty and contemptuous carriages towards those that are beneath us in either respect, is a frequent occasion of bitter jars and animosities. The apostle chargeth it upon the Corinthians, "That no one be puffed up for one against "another; for who maketh thee to differ from another?" 1 Cor. vi. 7. What respectful language did holy Mr. Brewen give to his own godly servants? Remember, Christians, that there is neither rich nor poor, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus. This, indeed, destroys not the civil differences God hath made between one and another; grace will teach the godly servant to give double honour to a religious master, or mistress, the private Christian to a godly magistrate, or minister. It will teach the people to know them which labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and admonish them, and to esteem them very highly in love for their works

ſake, and to be at peace among themſelves, 1 Theſſ. v. 12, 13. and it will alſo teach ſuperiors to condeſcend to men of low degree, and not to think of themſelves above what they ought, but "with all lowlineſs, meekneſs, and long-ſuffering, to for-"bear one another in love, keeping (this way) the unity of the "Spirit in the bond of peace," Eph. iv. 2, 3.

Direction 5. This gentle language and reſpectful deportment, would naturally and conſtantly flow from the uniting grace of wiſdom, humility, and love, were they more exalted in the hearts of Chriſtians.

Wiſdom would allay thoſe unchriſtian heats, Prov. xvii. 27. a man of underſtanding is of an excellent ſpirit, ſo we render it; but the Hebrew ſignifies a cool ſpirit; "the wiſdom that is "from above is gentle, and eaſy to be intreated," James iii. 17.

Humility takes away the fuel from the fire of contention; only from pride cometh contention, Prov. xiii. 10. How dearly hath pride, eſpecially ſpiritual pride, coſt the churches of Chriſt?

Love is the very cement of ſocieties, the fountain of peace and unity; it thinketh no evil, 1 Cor. xiii. puts the faireſt ſenſe upon doubtful words and actions, it beareth all things. "Love "me (ſaith Auſtin) and reprove me as thou pleaſeſt:" It is a radical grace, bearing the fruits of peace and unity upon it.

Direction 6. Be of a Chriſt-like forgiving ſpirit one towards another, Eph. iv. 31, 32. "Let all bitterneſs, and wrath, and "anger, and clamour, and evil-ſpeaking be put away from you, "with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-heart-"ed, forgiving one another, even as God for Chriſt's ſake hath "forgiven you." Hath thy brother offended thee? How apt art thou alſo to offend thy brother? And, which is infinitely more, how often doſt thou every day grieve and offend Jeſus Chriſt, who yet freely forgives all thy offences? Remember friend, that an unforgiving is a ſad ſign of an unforgiven perſon. They that have found mercy, pity, and forgiveneſs, ſhould of all men in the world, be moſt ready to ſhew it.

Direction 7. Be deeply affected with the miſchievous effects and conſequents of ſchiſms and diviſions in the ſocieties of the ſaints, and let nothing beneath a plain neceſſity, divide you from communion one with another; hold it faſt till you can hold it no longer without ſin. At the fire of your contentions your enemies warm their hands, and ſay, Aha, ſo would we have it: Your prayers are obſtructed, Matth. v. 24. "Firſt be "reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift." Edification is hindered: Feveriſh bodies thrive not, Eph. iv. 15. *God is provoked* to remove his gracious preſence from

among you. "Be of one mind (saith the apostle) live in peace, "and the God of peace shall be with you," 1 Cor. xiii. 11. implying that their contentions would deprive them of his blessed company with them. The glory of your society is clouded; "If ye have bitter envyings and strife in your heart, glory "not," James iii. 14. Glory not in your church privileges, personal gifts and attainments; whatever you think of yourselves, you are not such Christians as you vogue yourselves for, living in sin so directly contrary to christianity. The name of Christ is dishonoured. You are taken out of the world, to be a people for his name, that is, for his honour; but there is little credit to the name of Christ from a dividing, wrangling people. The alluring beauty of Christianity, by which the church gains upon the world, Acts ii. 46, 47. is sullied and defaced, and thereby (as I noted before) conversion hindred, and a new stone, as it were, rolled over the graves of poor sinners, to keep them down in their impenitency: Tremble therefore at the thoughts of divisions and separations. St Augustine notes three sins severely punished in scripture. The golden calf, with the sword; Jehoiakim's cutting the sacred roll, with a dreadful captivity; but the schism of Korah, and his accomplices, with the earth's opening her mouth and swallowing them up quick.

Direction 8. Let all church-members see that they have union with Christ, evidencing itself in daily sweet communion with him. Lines drawn from a circumference come the nearest to one another in the center. When God intends to make the hearts of men one, he first makes them new, Ezek. xi. 19. "I will give "them one heart, and I will put a new Spirit within you." And the more any renewed heart tastes the sweetness of communion with God, by so much it is disposed for unity and peace with his people. Our frowardness and peevishness plainly discovers all is not well betwixt God and us. Nothing so opposite to or abhorred by a soul that enjoys sweet peace and communion with Christ, than to live in sinful jars and contentions with his people. Return therefore to the primitive spirit of love and unity; forbear one another; forgive one another; mortify your dividing lusts; cherish your uniting graces: "mark them "which cause divisions and offences, contrary to the doctrine "ye have learned, and avoid them," Rom. xvi. 17. In a word, and that the word of the apostle in the text, "I beseech you, "brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all "speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among "you, but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same "mind, and in the same judgment."

ENGLAND's DUTY,

UNDER THE PRESENT

GOSPEL-LIBERTY.

From Revelation iii. 20.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

MOUNT PISGAH:

OR, A

Thanksgiving SERMON for ENGLAND's Delivery from POPERY, Feb. 1688-9.

An EPISTLE TO THE READER.

Candid Reader,

THE following discourse comes to thy hand in that native plainness wherein it was preached. I was conscientiously unwilling to alter it, because I found by experience, the Lord had blessed and prospered it in that dress, far beyond any other compositures on which I had bestowed more pains. Let it not be censured as vanity or ostentation, that I here acknowledge the goodness of God, in leading me to, and blessing my poor labours upon this subject. Who, and what am I that I should be continued, and again employed in the Lord's harvest, and that with success and encouragement, when so many of my brethren, with their much richer furnitures of gifts and graces, have in my time been called out of the vineyard, and are now silent in the grave! It is true, they enjoy what I do not; and it is as true, I am capable of doing some service for God, which they are not. In preaching these sermons, I had many occasions to reflect upon the mystical sense of that scrip-

ture, Amos ix. 13. "The plowman ſhall overtake the reaper, "and the treader of grapes him that ſoweth ſeed." Sowing and reaping times trode ſo cloſe upon one another, that (in all humility I ſpeak it to the praiſe of God) it was the buſieſt and bleſſedeſt time I ever ſaw, ſince I firſt preached the goſpel.

England hath now a day of ſpecial mercy: there is a wide door of opportunity opened to it; O that it might prove an effectual door! It is tranſporting and aſtoniſhing, that after all the high and horrid provocations, the atheiſm, prophaneneſs and bitter enmity againſt light and reformation: this ſweet voice is ſtill heard in England, *Behold, I ſtand at the door and knock.* The mercies and liberties of this day are a new trial obtained for us by our potent Advocate in the heavens: if we bring forth fruit, well; if not, the ax lieth at the root of the tree. Let us not be ſecure. Jeruſalem was the city of the great King; the ſeat of his worſhip, and ſymbols of his preſence were fixed there; it was the joy of the whole earth, the houſe of prayer for all nations; thither the tribes went up to worſhip, the tribes of the Lord unto the teſtimony of Iſrael. For there were ſet thrones of judgment, the thrones of the houſe of David, Pſal. cxxii. 4, 5. Theſe privileges ſhe enjoyed through the ſucceſſion of many ages, and had remained the glory of all nations to this day, had ſhe known and improved, in that day, *the things that belonged to her peace;* but they neglected their ſeaſon, rejected their mercies, and miſerably periſhed in their ſins: for there ever was, and will be found an inſeparable connexion betwixt the final rejection of Chriſt, and the deſtruction of the rejecters, Matth. xxii. 5, 6, 7. The contemplation whereof drew thoſe compaſſionate tears from the Redeemer's eyes, when he beheld it in his deſcent from the mount of Olives, Luke xix. 41, 42.

Let all that are wiſe in heart henceforth depoſe their animoſities, ſadly reflect on their follies, encourage and aſſiſt the labours of their brethren in the Lord's harveſt; and rejoice that God hath ſet them at liberty by law, whoſe aſſiſtance in ſo great an opportunity is neceſſary and deſirable. It is againſt the laws of wiſdom and charity, to envy the liberty, and much more the ſucceſs of our brethren, 1 Cor. xiii. 4. If the workmen contend and ſcuffle in a catching harveſt, who but the owner ſuffers damage by it? If, after ſo miraculous, recent, and common a ſalvation as this, we ſtill retain our old prejudices and bitter envyings; if we ſmite with the tongue and pen, when we cannot with the hand; and ſtudy to blaſt the reputation and labours of our brethren; and ſtill hate thoſe we can-

not hurt: In a word, if we ſtill bite and devour one another, we ſhall be devoured one of another. Let us not lay the fault upon others, we ourſelves have been the authors and inſtruments of our own ruin; and this muſt be the inſcription upon our tombſtone, *O England, thou haſt deſtroyed thyſelf.* I am more afraid of the rooted enmity and fixed prejudices, that are to be found in many againſt holineſs and the ſerious profeſſors of it, and inflexible obſtinacy and dead formality in many others, (the tokens of a tremendous infatuation) than I am of all the whiſpered fears from other hands, or common enemies upon our borders.

To prevent theſe miſchiefs, and promote zeal and unaminity among the miniſters of the goſpel, I have preſumed to addreſs them in the following epiſtles. I am conſcious of my own unworthineſs to be their monitor, and of the defects their judicious eyes will eaſily diſcern in the ſtile wherein it is written; and yet can promiſe myſelf a becoming reception of what is ſo faithfully, ſeaſonably, and honeſtly deſigned for their good. I am ſatisfied that no candid and ingenuous perſon will put words upon the rack, quarrel at a ſimilitude, or expoſe a trifle, when he finds the deſign honeſt, and the matter good and neceſſary.

As to the treatiſe itſelf, thou wilt find it a perſuaſive to open thy heart to Chriſt. Thy ſoul, reader, is a magnificent ſtructure built by Chriſt; ſuch ſtately rooms as thy underſtanding, will, conſcience and affections, are too good for any other to inhabit. If thou be in thy unregenerate ſtate, then he ſolemnly demands, in this text, admiſſion into the ſoul he made, by the conſent of the will: which, if thou refuſe to give him, then witneſs is taken, that Chriſt once more demanded entrance into thy ſoul which he made, and was denied it. If thou haſt opened thy heart to him, thou wilt, I hope, meet ſomewhat in this treatiſe that will clear thy evidences, and cheer thy heart: Pray read, ponder and apply. I am

Thine and the

Church's ſervant,

JOHN FLAVEL.

A LETTER*

To the dearly beloved Miniſters of the Goſpel, (much to be reverenced in Chriſt) now at length, by the wonderful Providence of GOD, reſtored to Liberty: Addreſſed as a humble Supplication to the *more aged*, and as an Exhortation to *younger* Miniſters and Candidates.

Reverend Fathers, and Brethren in Chriſt,

THOUGH it is not fit for us to coin metaphors, according to our fancy, yet we ought to have a great liking to thoſe, which the Spirit himſelf hath authoriſed in ſcripture. There he hath repreſented, and painted to the life, the deliverance of his ſuffering church, by the ſweet delights of the advancing Spring, Cant. ii. 12.

In the Spring, the Earth, like a moſt bountiful parent, opens her boſom, produces variety of herbs, adorns the meadows with abundance of flowers; the trees, which had been ſtript of their former green leaves, are clothed with new ones; the cold being now driven away, the air becomes warm, and the cattle bring home udders full of milk;

Then joyous birds frequent the lonely groves.

DRYDEN's Virgil.

All nature is renewed and ſmiles; the ſeaſon is kindly, favourable, and admirably well adapted to the benefit of all things, chiefly of thoſe endued with life. All which things have been, in a very elaborate and ingenious manner, applied by our learned countryman Brightman, to that remarkable period, when Cyrus publiſhed that edict of his, (which can never

* This letter was originally wrote in Latin, the author judging it neceſſary to be ſo, as what allowed him a greater freedom of expreſſion, than might ſeem convenient at that time in the common language; yet, that every reader might be profited by it, the publiſher of this edition hath thought fit to tranſlate it into Engliſh. It has a reference to the troubles before, and the bleſſings after the Revolution.

: ſufficiently commended) for ſetting God's people at liberty. he enlivening beams of a like providential interpoſition, like e ſun entering the ſign of *Aries*, have made us, who were alf-dead, to revive.

We are not inſenſible, as our wounds are yet green, what reat and ſharp afflictions we have ſuffered for many years byaſt, for conſcience ſake. Alas, what ſad things have we not een! what oppreſſions have we not unjuſtly endured, during his rough, diſmal, and every-way deſtructive winter? We have een the ſea ſwelling with dreadful ſtorms, by reaſon of which, ome being amazed and confounded, they hoiſed ſail to any ind whatſoever: we have ſeen trees that excelled others, both n fruitfulneſs and comelineſs, beat down and laid low by the ormy winds; others, which bare neither fruit nor leaves, have been, as it were, blaſted. Mountains have we ſeen become white with hoar-froſt, rivers locked up in ice, lands covered, nay, buried in ſnow; flocks of fowls, and herds of cattle ſtarved with hunger, wandering up and down in great want; cunning fowlers ſpreading their nets, and inſnaring many: In a word, we have ſeen Chriſt's church (alas!) pierced with arrows winged with her own feathers; the civil ſtate founded on laws, almoſt ſubverted by laws; every thing having a bad aſpect, and growing daily worſe and worſe.

Long and ſore have we been toſſed in the ſea of trouble; in our youth we were plunged into it, we are come out of it in old age: our caſe has been the ſame with what happened at the ſiege of Tyre, Ezek. xxix. 18. *Every head is made bald, and every ſhoulder is peeled*; but yet all theſe things ſeem troubleſome rather than wonderful, to any one who ſeriouſly conſiders the things propheſied by the great apoſtle, 2 Tim. iii. 1. *In the laſt days, perilous times ſhall come.* Of which perilous times, * Lactantius writes thus: 'When the end of this world 'is approaching, the ſtate of human affairs muſt needs be 'greatly changed, and grow worſe, through the prevalency of 'wickedneſs; in ſo much that this preſent age, wherein ſin and 'wickedneſs have been arrived to the greateſt pitch, may, 'when compared with that abandoned and incorrigible age, 'be juſtly deemed the happy and golden one. For then righ-'teouſneſs ſhall decreaſe, and ungodlineſs, avarice, ambition, 'and luſt increaſe: ſo that whoſoever ſhall happen then to be 'ſober and religious, ſhall become a prey to the wicked, and 'be greatly harraſſed by the unrighteous; the vicious alone

* *Lactan. lib.* 70. *de divino præmio, p.* 578, 579.

'shall be prosperous and happy, while the people of God shall 'meet with every kind of bad treatment, and be reduced to 'extreme poverty. All right shall be confounded, laws shall 'perish; then no body shall possess any thing but what is ill 'got, or what he is obliged to defend by force; rapine and vi-'olence shall carry every thing before them: there shall be no 'fidelity among men, no peace, no humanity, no shame, no 'truth, and neither safety nor order, nor any rest from trouble; 'for the whole earth shall be in confusion, and the noise and 'din of war heard every where; all nations shall be up in 'arms, and attack one another; neighbouring states shall war 'among themselves; destruction shall run over the face of the 'earth, cutting down every thing, and laying it along, as corn-'fields are in harvest. The reason of which dreadful calami-'ty and strange confusion, will be this, That the *Roman name*, 'which has subdued the whole world, shall then (I tremble to 'utter it, but, since it is certain, utter it I must) be quite ex-'tinct.'

What think you, reader, is not this a description of our own times, or must we wait longer, till that pernicious and wicked race of men shall appear upon the stage? That this hath been fulfilled in our late troubles, none sure can hesitate that hath any discernment.

But God at length, pitying our distresses, hath raised up a man *, both zealous for the truth, and a lover of godliness, boldly to assert his cause in the face of danger and toil, and to put a new face on things. Concerning this time it shall be said, *What wonderful things hath God done?* Now every impediment being removed, and the dreadful storm calmed, (which scatters up and down like stubble) our gracious God doth in this manner bespeak us, *Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away; for lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth, the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.* As if he had said, You have been long enough confined at home; come now (for you may safely come) abroad. There is the greatest appearance of safety and incitement to labour every where. Thus the severity of the Winter recommends to us the pleasures of the Spring.

For my part, I had no sooner heard the joyful news of *Liberty*, than presently I began to prepare myself for my proper and much longed for work; for if so much pleasure is found

* WILLIAM III. Prince of ORANGE.

in the ſtudy of the *mathematics*, that when one has taſted of it, he is ſo raviſhed and bewitched with it, that he cannot be taken off from the ſtudy of them; it will certainly be the ſweeteſt pleaſure of all, to employ our labours, however much we are exhauſted, for the glory of Chriſt, and good of ſouls: it gives me therefore no ſmall pleaſure, that at length I may put in my ſickle, which hath been long in diſuſe, into the Lord's harveſt, together with the reſt of my fellow-labourers. Thanks to my God, who hath not only ſeaſonably opened a door of opportunity, but hath alſo (which I earneſtly ſupplicated for) given me to ſee the happy effects of ſound doctrine, and hath long ago bleſſed it unto many.

Theſe firſt-fruits of Reſtored Liberty, and which many have importuned me to publiſh, I now moſt humbly offer unto you. Indulge a brother, the weakeſt of all, and one who reckons himſelf juſtly inferior to all the ſervants of Chriſt; if, on this ſignal and moſt extraordinary occaſion, Chriſtian zeal ſhould break forth a little more freely than may be ſuitable either to my ſmall ſhare of learning or experience.

Here your preacher hath not ſought after the pomp of eloquence. Through the whole I have uſed a popular, not polite, ſtile; pithy, not ſhowy: for I thought it might be juſtly ſaid concerning *Theology*, what Cicero ſays of *Philoſophy*, That to talk upon ſubjects of that nature in an elaborate ſtile, is childiſh; but to be capable of delivering with plainneſs and perſpicuity, is the part of a learned and knowing man. I ſhould be juſtly diſpleaſed with myſelf, if I preached the doctrine of a crucified Chriſt, in a ſtile unbecoming his croſs; which ſurely is the character of a ſtile pompous and ſwelling.

Theſe things being premiſed,

I. Let us rejoice in our liberty, with a joy duely moderated; I mean, with a joy equally balanced, and guarded on all hands by grief for paſt ſins, and dread of future ones. We read in Jeremiah, of the voice of ſighing and weeping, with which the faithful would, about the time of their deliverance, confeſs their ſins, by which they had provoked God, and would ſincerely bewail them with contrite hearts. And how ſuitable was that ſong of the church, even at the laying the foundation of the ſecond temple; a ſong equally compoſed of joyful ſhouting, and abundant weeping, Ezra iii. 10. "Many weeped with "a loud voice, many ſhouted aloud for joy; ſo that the people "could not diſcern the noiſe of the ſhout of joy, from the noiſe "of the weeping of the people." Nor are the ſaints aſhamed

to confeſs their falls and ſhameful deeds to the glory of God, for nothing is a loſs to us, which redounds to his glory. Our countenance muſt in his ſight be comely and amiable, when he ſees penitential tears mixed with thoſe of joy and thankſgiving. It is the character of a true penitent to lament his faults, that he may not again commit things to be lamented.

Aſaph has ſet before us an illuſtrious example of penitence, Pſal. lxxiv. 8. *Remember not* (ſays he) *againſt us our former iniquities*. God is ſaid to remember iniquities, when calling ſins to an account, and judging of their greatneſs and number, he reſolves to puniſh. Aſaph ſpeaks of God after the manner of men; for they, when greatly offended, and about to puniſh their children, do then call to mind all their former faults: let us, in like manner, reflect on ours, and ſincerely bewail our paſt ſlothful conduct, an unhappy concomitant of liberty: Thus we have neither flamed with ardent love on the one hand, nor grieved with that degree of ſorrow which was requiſite on the other: we have oftentimes ſpoken more from the head than from the heart. We have both prayed and preached too too coldly about matters the moſt awful and important. We have not followed the footſteps of thoſe worthies that went before us in the laſt age, ſo as to come up with them. We have been at ſmall pains to ſupport the majeſty of religion, by the gravity of our converſation, and the uſefulneſs of our diſcourſes. For which cauſe our God has conceived juſt anger againſt us, and has manifeſted that by the paſt calamities; and by ſo manifeſting it hath plainly admoniſhed us to be on our guard for the time to come.

II. Therefore brethren, I earneſtly beg of you, in the bowels of Chriſt, that you will not forget theſe words of the apoſtle, *If it be poſſible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men*, Rom. xii. 18. There is added a twofold limitation, firſt, *If it be poſſible*, that is, conſiſtently with juſtice, piety, and truth: Such a regard is not to be had to truth, as that the ſtudy of peace be entirely neglected; nor is ſuch unity to be ſought after, as deſtroys truth; *but ſpeak the truth in love*, as the ſame apoſtle exhorts, Eph. iv. 15. For, as our countryman Mr. Davenant juſtly obſerves, they love neither from the heart, who love not both. Chriſtians therefore, when they both live peaceably in owning the truth, and ſpeak the truth in love, are a great ornament to their profeſſion. The other limitation is, *As much as lieth in you*, that is, live in friendſhip with all, if it be poſſible; and if they will not be friendly on their part, be ſure you be ſo on yours. Truth begets hatred among the

wicked, and godliness is ever despised by them; of which Lactantius † assigns this reason, 'That he who sins, wants to have 'a free opportunity of sinning, and thinks he can no otherwise 'enjoy securely the pleasure of his ill deeds, than when there 'are many who delight in the same faults. Hence they study 'to destroy and cut off root and branch, those who are witnesses of their wickedness, and they cannot endure that good 'mens lives should be a reproof, as it were, of theirs. Therefore by the friendship of the wicked, piety is endangered.'

We have some amongst us, that put on a form of godliness, but have denied the power thereof: of such ‡ Bernard in his time thus complained: 'Woe to this generation, which hath 'the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy: If indeed 'that should be called hypocrisy, which now through its prevalency cannot be hid, and through its impudency seeks not 'to be hid. At present rottenness and corruption affects the 'whole body of the church, and the wider it spreads, the more 'desperate; and the more inwardly it spreads, the more dangerous: for if an *heretic*, an open enemy, should rise up, he 'would be cast out; if a violent enemy, she *(i. e.)* the church) 'would perhaps conceal herself from him. But now, whom 'shall the church cast out? or whom shall she hide herself 'from? All are friends, and all are enemies; all are in mutual 'connexions, as relations, yet in mutual contests, as adversaries: all are fellow-members of one family, yet none are 'promoters of peace: all are neighbours, yet all are seekers of 'their own things: by profession servants of Christ, in reality 'they serve Antichrist: they make an honourable figure by 'the good things they have received from the Lord, while, at 'the same time, they give no honour to the Lord.' I will say of these men, My soul, come not into their council; my glory, be not in their assembly.

But there are many others, zealous of peace and truth, agreeing in fundamentals, and standing equally against the common enemies of the reformed religion, who, notwithstanding, differ (alas!) about matters not necessary to salvation, and split into opposite parties, and cause strife: while this fierce contention spreads itself among the brethren, it affords a continual occasion to their enemies to insult and molest them. Could any one find out a remedy for this epidemical distemper, he would de-

† Lactantius on Justice, b. 5. p. 382, 383.
‡ Bernard, Sermon xxxiii. on Cant.

ſerve well of the church; but ſince the experience of ſo many years has put it beyond doubt that it is difficult, or indeed impracticable to accompliſh this by ſcholaſtic diſputes, or by oppreſſing the conſcience with penalties; it were more adviſeable to ſopite all their debates, than, by fruitleſs ſtrife, to tear aſunder the church; and in fine, to have recourſe to that which is the moſt uſeful, if not the only rule for promoting peace, Phil. iii. 16. *Wherein we have already attained, let us walk by the ſame rule:* with which agrees well that moſt wholeſome advice given by Toſſanus to the college of Tubing, in the following words: 'All bitter railings and accuſations ought juſtly to be 'laid aſide, and the judgment of theſe matters in debate left 'wholly to the Son of God, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to our 'own poſterity, who, not being authors but ſpectators of the 'debate, will judge more impartially about it. Our adverſa-'ries ſtill live and become bolder every day; they make it their 'buſineſs, night and day, to plot and contrive how they may 'extinguiſh the light of the goſpel that has ariſen, and bring 'ancient darkneſs; in the mean time, we who, at firſt, with one 'accord, by God's grace, preached the goſpel, do now, with 'weapons of death turned againſt one another, ruſh mutually 'on deſtruction; thereby exhibiting a delightful ſpectacle to 'our enemies, who place more of their ſafety and confidence 'in our contentions, than the weak foundation of their own 'cauſe.'

Let us therefore frequently conſider that of the apoſtle, Gal. v. 15. *But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not conſumed one of another.* What Cicero ſaid of the diſcords of great men, our countryman Davenant ſcruples not to affirm concerning thoſe of the churches, That they commonly end, either in the ruin of both parties, or in the unjuſt tyranny of that ſide which overcomes. It is greatly to be feared, that every one, by theſe continual and fierce debates, is haſtening (may God prevent it) his own ruin: yet I doubt not but that all diſcords amongſt the godly might be extinguiſhed, whatever ſome may alledge to the contrary, if the minds of ſome were freed from the violent emotions of ſuſpicion, anger, and envy. Behold, brethren, what a ſeaſonable and proper ſoftening plaiſter our ſkilful Phyſician hath applied to us all at this time. God grant it the deſired effect; leſt the ſcar not being right cloſed up, the wound ſhould break out again.

The godly in every place lament the preſent deplorable ſtate of the church; and, from the deſtruction of ſome, do conjecture what danger hangs over all.

† *Hence let contending nations know,*
What direful miſchiefs from their diſcords flow.

Certain it is, that all wiſe and good men on both ſides, (however they differ among themſelves) are unanimous in this at leaſt, That theſe are not times for ſtrife, but times that call for prayer and reformation; for, ſuch are the prayers they every where offer up: '*May God turn the heart of the fathers to* '*the children, and the heart of the children to the fathers, leſt* '*he come and ſmite the earth with a curſe.* Theſe do not well 'conſult their own intereſt, who, becauſe of diſputes among the 'learned, perhaps never to be ended, will needs be tearing the 'church by perpetual diviſions. Our brethren, that ſeriouſly 'profeſs they differ from us in ſmaller matters of religion, for 'no other reaſon, than a fear of offending, theſe ought to be 'embraced with the greateſt affection. Let all cauſes of of-'fence be preſently removed, that we may not ſtumble twice 'on the ſame ſtone. If we fall upon it again, we are broken 'in pieces. We will not grant them this praiſe, that they are 'more ſtudious of peace and concord than ourſelves. You may 're-exact a conformity in fundamentals and things neceſſary in 'religion; but in matters of indifference, and not abſolutely 'neceſſary, you may give a larger liberty. No body ſhould 'aſſume to himſelf a liberty of dividing the church, and diſſol-'ving brotherly unity on ſuch a ground as neither Chriſt, nor 'the apoſtles, nor the primitive church in its pureſt ſtate would 'ever have approved.'

It muſt be confeſſed, that all kinds of controverſy will never be at an end; nevertheleſs we can bid farewel to all diſcord; for variety of opinions, and unity among thoſe that hold them, are not things inconſiſtent. Why ſhould there dwell in the breaſt of a Chriſtian, the fierceneſs of wolves, the madneſs of dogs, the deadly poiſon of ſerpents, the cruel ſavageneſs of beaſts? as Cyprian long ſince complained. That is (ſaith Gregory) a new and unheard of manner of preaching, that forces a belief with ſtripes: therefore let all bitter railing and accuſation be gone; May the God of peace bring all into order and peace.

III. Eſpecially and above all, I humbly beſeech you, that, having laid aſide all deſigns of ſmaller importance, you would mind this one thing, how you may gain to Chriſt the ſouls com-

† ——*En quo diſcordia gentes*
Perduxit miſeras.

mitted to you, to which all earthly things are to be poſtponed. This is the labour, this the work incumbent on us.

Put far from you a vile, niggardly ſparing of your gifts, an immoderate care for worldly things, an exceſſive indulgence of the vile body. Let it not ſeem much to us to ſpend a little ſweat for the ſake of thoſe ſouls for which Chriſt ſo willingly and plentifully poured out his own moſt precious blood. If we hide the Lord's talent in a napkin, where ſhall we find a napkin to dry up our tears of blood for ſo baſe a crime?

Remember, brethren, that it will be required at our hands, how we have ſpent every portion of that time which is given us; how much of it have we already loſt in unprofitable ſilence! But among all the oppreſſions, under which you have long groaned, I perſuade myſelf, there is none you have more ſorrowed for than that of being ſo long withholden from feeding poor hungry ſouls. The preſent opportunity is ſlippery, and may be loſt, as to what concerns futurity, the clouds return after the rain. Up then ye ſervants of God, mind this your buſineſs, and the Lord ſhall be with you: don't regard the uſual murmurings of the fleſh. Look forward to that heavenly crown: "They that be wiſe ſhall ſhine as the brightneſs "of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteouſneſs "as the ſtars for ever and ever."

With the hopes of this, let us rouze up and fortify our drooping hearts, againſt the mockings and troubles we may expect for the ſake of the goſpel; What bowels of compaſſion ought we to put on, when we ſpeak to ſuch men of ſaving their ſouls, and ſhunning perdition, into which they may quickly fall, but who, in the mean time, have not the leaſt thought about theſe things themſelves? A famous author in Ameſius * complains, 'That the words of life in ſome preachers and 'teachers lips die away, as to any power or efficacy: For ſo 'coldly and unconcernedly do they deliver the word of God, 'that it ſeems to die in their lips. Hence, as they themſelves 'are cold and dead preachers, ſo they leave their hearers in a 'cold and dead frame. I knew one who left Paris for this reaſon, becauſe he ſaid, he was more and more benumbed with 'the lectures and ſermons he heard from day to day in that ci'ty; and was afraid, that if he ſtaid much longer there, his ſoul 'would have periſhed with ſpiritual cold: wherefore he join'ed himſelf to lively miniſters, as unto live-coals; that ſo by

* Caſes of Conſcience, book 3. p. 16.

converſing with them, he might nouriſh and encreaſe an holy flame in his heart.'

Liſt up your eyes and behold the fields white, and ready to harveſt; ſee how you are on every ſide ſurrounded with crouds of poor hungry ſouls, with open mouth and earneſt looks begging ſpiritual bread from you. If we have the bowels of the chief Shepherd in us, let us feed his ſheep. Some are almoſt worn out with old age and various troubles: others leſſen the majeſty of ſcripture by inſiſting much on things of little moment, and fill the ears of the multitude with a vain noiſe of words, or tickle them with ſmooth ſpeeches. In ſuch a ſituation, if you, who are furniſhed with all kind of gifts, and have ſo full and fair opportunity, do not burn with zeal to God, and love to ſouls; I tremble to look forward to the dreadful and wretched end of you all.

IV. *Laſtly*, I will conclude with a few things which I thought neceſſary for ſtudents of *Theology*, and candidates for the miniſtry, who have at this needful time willingly devoted themſelves to this ſervice, or are about to do it: We have long borne the burden and heat of the day; we are veteran ſoldiers almoſt worn out. The next age will poſſibly produce more tractable minds, and men of gentler diſpoſitions than our times afford.

I congratulate you on account of your birth eſpecially, if your natural birth be, or ſhall be ennobled and ſanctified by regeneration: and this is the more reaſonable, becauſe all our famous chronologers and ſearchers into times, who have beſtowed much time and pains in that ſtudy, are big with expectation, like a woman big with child, paſt the time of her reckoning, who therefore expects her pains to come upon her every hour. It is very probable, that the day which all the prophets foretold, and all good men have, as it were with outſtretched neck, been eagerly looking for, is now at hand.

Do you, therefore, ye brave youths, the hope and deſire of the reviving church, with eagerneſs lay hold on this favourable opportunity of enriching your minds with all neceſſary gifts and endowments. Keep yourſelves cloſe night and day at your ſtudies and moſt fervent prayers: He will make the beſt divine, that ſtudies on his knees. And how ſhall we contend for the truth, or defend it againſt the adverſaries, if we are deſtitute of gifts? Neither a good diſpoſition, nor the charms of eloquence, nor a graceful geſture, nor good manners, can compenſate for the want of gifts.

But on the other hand, beware, brethren, leſt while the tree of knowledge every day thrives and proſpers, the tree of life

alone ſhould languiſh and become barren, as an excellent divine † ſpeaks very pertinently. Take care you put not that laſt, which ſhould be firſt; and that, again, firſt, which ſhould be laſt. Meaſures ſo perniciouſly prepoſterous will be fatal to the whole work of converſion. A head well inſtructed, is much to be deſired; but a ſanctified heart is abſolutely neceſſary. "Covet earneſtly the beſt gifts, and yet ſhew I unto you a more "excellent way," 1 Cor. xii. 31. For gifts, let them increaſe; but grace, let it outſhine them all. Let theſe words of the great apoſtle take deep root in your hearts, 1 Cor. ix. 27. "But "I keep under my body, and bring it into ſubjection, leſt that "by any means, when I have preached unto others, I myſelf "ſhould be a caſt-away." For what will it profit, to be learned and damned? It is one thing to be learned in the truths of Chriſt, another to be taught by him, as the truth is in Jeſus.

Continually bear in mind this ſerious warning of our learned countryman Reynolds ‡, 'Let us not think much of ourſelves, though God ſhould have adorned us with the fineſt gifts of nature, with a lively genius, with an elegant diction, much reading, long experience of things, ſkill in the arts, languages and ſciences, ſolidity of judgment, quickneſs of underſtanding, almoſt like that of angels, unleſs at the ſame time he add to all, the gift of his Spirit to help us to know and delight in the heavenly myſtery. For though by the exerciſe of thoſe ſhining accompliſhments, we may procure to ourſelves the favour and eſteem of men, though from thence great advantage may redound to the learned world, and to the church of Chriſt, yet do they not at all tend to obtain for us either the favour of God, or the reward of heavenly happineſs.' May God give you miniſterial and ſanctifying gifts, that you may approve yourſelves to be defenders of Chriſt and his religion, and firm oppoſers of his enemies.

But it is time to cloſe this unpoliſhed and homely letter, which, however, I hope you will favourably accept as a teſtimony of that reſpect due to you from

Your fellow-ſervant in

the goſpel of Chriſt,

JOHN FLAVEL.

† *S. Ford. Ambitio ſac.* ‡ *Animalis homo.*

To the READER.

THE worthy author of the diſcourſe emitted herewith, is one whoſe praiſe is in the goſpel throughout all the churches. His other books have made his name precious and famous in *both Englands*. Nor can my teſtimony add any thing to one every way greater than myſelf. Nevertheleſs, a ſingular providence having caſt my lot to be at preſent in this great city; I could not withſtand the importunity of them, who deſired a few *Prefatory* lines to manifeſt the reſpect I owe to this renowned and learned man.

It was a wiſe reproof which a grave divine adminiſtred to a young preacher, who entertained his auditory with an elaborate diſcourſe: after he had commended his parts and pains, there was (ſaid he) one thing wanting in the ſermon; *I could not perceive that the Spirit of God was in it.* And though *morality* is good, and neceſſary to be taught and practiſed, yet it is much to be lamented, that many preachers in theſe days have hardly any other diſcourſes in their pulpits than what we find in Seneca, Epictetus, Plutarch, or ſome ſuch heathen *moraliſt*. Chriſt, the holy Spirit, and (in a word) *the goſpel* is not in their ſermons. But bleſſed be God, that there are ſome (and great is their company in this land of light) who preach the truth as it is in Jeſus: and he who has taken the book out of the right hand of him that ſits on the throne, and is worthy to open the ſeals thereof, has been pleaſed in wonderful ways to ſet open, and keep *open a door of liberty* to the goſpel, that they, unto whom he has given a heart to preach Chriſt, may do it. This is the Lord's doing; this is a *Spirit of life from God.* When Cyrus proclaimed liberty for the free exerciſe of religion, the Lord's ſervants, who for ſome years had *lain dead, were brought out of their graves*, Ezek. xxxvii. 12, 13.

This treatiſe is a word in ſeaſon: God has made the author to be a *wiſe maſter-builder* in his houſe, and according to the wiſdom given him of God, he has enlarged on a goſpel ſubject very proper to be inſiſted on at ſuch a day as this. I am informed by unqueſtionable hands, that there was a remarkable pouring out of the Spirit when theſe ſermons were *viva voce* delivered, a great number of ſouls having been brought home to Chriſt thereby. The Lord grant that the ſecond preaching of them to far greater multitudes, by this way of the preſs, may, by

the same Spirit, be made abundantly successful for the conversion and salvation of God's elect. The fruit brought forth by the holy apostles in respect of the writings of some (as well as the doctrine preached by all) of them, does still remain. The fruitful labours of this faithful servant of Christ will promote the glory of God, and the good of souls, when he himself shall cease from his labours, and his works shall follow him. Let the Lord's people be thankful to him for that he has sent such a labourer into the harvest, and pray that he may be continued long therein, and that many such (for there are but few such) may be raised up, and be made eminently successful in their holy endeavours, to the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ, and of God; and let him reign in this land for ever and ever, which is the heart's desire and prayer of one who is

Less than the least of all saints,

London, 1689. INCREASE MATHER.

SERMON I.

REV. iii. 20. [*Behold*] *I stand at the door, and knock, if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and sup with him, and he with me.*

THIS day hath our compassionate Redeemer opened unto us a door of liberty; liberty to us to preach, and liberty for you to hear the glad tidings of the gospel. This is a day few looked for: how often have I said in the years that are past, God hath no more work for me to do, and I shall have no more strength and opportunities to work for God? And how often have you said in your hearts, we have sinned our ministers out of their *pulpits*, and our eyes shall no more behold those our teachers? But lo, beyond the thoughts of most hearts, a wide and (I hope) an effectual door is now opened in the midst of us. Oh! that it might be to us as the valley of Achor was to Israel, *for a door of hope*, Hos. ii. 15. *(i. e.)* not only making the troubles they meet with in that valley an inlet to their mercies, as ours have been to us; but giving them that valley *pignoris nomine*, as a pledge of greater mercies intended for them. Upon the first appearance of this mercy, my next thoughts were how to make the most fruitful improvement of

it amongſt you, leſt we ſhould twice ſtumble at the ſame ſtone, and ſin ourſelves back again into our old bondage.

In the contemplation of this matter, the Lord directed me to this ſcripture, wherein the ſame hand that opened to you the door of liberty, knocks importunately at the doors of your hearts for entrance into them, for union and communion with them. It will be ſad indeed if he that hath let you into all theſe mercies, ſhould himſelf be ſhut out of your hearts: but if the Lord ſhould help you to open your hearts now to Chriſt, I doubt not but this door of liberty will be kept open to you, how many ſoever the adverſaries be that envy it, and will do their utmoſt to ſhut it up, Ezek. xxxix. 29. The mercies you enjoy this day, are the fruits of Chriſt's interceſſion with the Father for one trial more: if we bring forth fruit, well; if not, *the ax lieth at the root of the tree.* Under this conſideration I deſire to preach, and even ſo the Lord help you to hear what ſhall be ſpoken from this precious ſcripture, *Behold I ſtand at the door and knock*, &c.

Theſe words are a branch of that excellent epiſtle dictated by Chriſt, and ſent by his ſervant John to the church of Laodicea, the moſt formal, hypocritical and degenerate of all the ſeven churches; yet the great *Phyſician* will try his ſkill upon them, both by the rebukes of the rod, verſe 19. and by the perſuaſive power of the word; verſe 20. *Behold I ſtand at the door and knock*, &c.

This text is Chriſt's wooing voice, full of heavenly rhetoric to win and gain the hearts of ſinners to himſelf; wherein we have theſe two general parts.

1. Chriſt's ſuit for a ſinner's heart.
2. The powerful arguments enforcing his ſuit.

Firſt, *Chriſt's ſuit for a ſinner's heart*, wherein we have (*1ſt*), The ſolemn preface, uſhering it in, *behold:* (2.) The ſuit itſelf. The preface is exceeding ſolemn: for beſide the common uſe of this word *behold*, in other places, to excite attention, or exaggerate and put weight into an affirmation; it ſtands here, as a judicious *expoſitor* † notes, as a term of *notification* or *public record*, wherein Chriſt takes witneſs of the moſt gracious offer he was now about to make to their ſouls, and will have it ſtand *in perpetuam rei memoriam*, as a teſtimony for or againſt their ſouls to all eternity, to cut off all excuſes and pretences for time to come.

2. The ſuit itſelf, wherein we have,

† Durham on the place.

1. The *Suitor*, Jesus Christ.

2. His posture and action; *I stand at the door and knock.*

3. The suit itself, which is for opening, *if any man open.*

1. The suitor, Christ himself, *I stand:* I that have a right of sovereignty over you; I that have shed my invaluable blood to purchase you, and might justly condem you, upon the first denial or demur; *behold I stand:* this is the suitor.

2. His posture and action, *I stand at the door, and knock;* the word is in the † *preter tense*, I have stood, but being here joined with another verb of the present tense, it is fitly translated, *I stand*, yet so as that it notes *a continued action.* I have stood, and do still stand with unwearied patience; I once stood personally and bodily among you in the days of my flesh, and I still stand spiritually and representatively in my *ambassadors at the door, (i. e.)* the mind and conscience, the faculties and powers which are introductive into the whole soul.

The word *door* is here properly put to signify those introductive faculties of the soul, which are of a like use to it, as the door is to the house. This is the Redeemer's posture, his action is *knocking, (i. e.)* his * powerful essay, and gracious attempts to open the heart to give him admission. The word *knock* signifies a strong and powerful knock; he stands patiently, and knocks powerfully by the word outwardly, by the convictions, motions, impulses, strivings, and instigations of his Spirit inwardly.

3. The design and end of the suit, it is for *opening, (i. e.)* consenting, receiving, embracing, and hearty accepting of him by faith. Acts xvi. 14. *The Lord opened the heart of Lydia, (i. e.)* persuaded her soul to believe; implying, that the heart by nature is strongly barred and locked up against Christ; and that nothing but a power from him can open it.

Secondly, The powerful arguments and motives used by Christ to obtain his suit, and get a grant from the sinner's heart; and they are drawn from two inestimable benefits accruing to the opening or believing soul, *viz.*

1. Union,
2. Communion with Christ.

1. *Union; I will come unto him*, that is, I will unite myself with the opening believing soul; he shall be mystically one with me, and I with him.

2. *Communion; I will sup with him, and he with me;* that is, I will feast the believing soul with the delicates of heaven;

† Preter. ‡ Κρουω a κυρας cornu, & sic sit κυρω, & per syncopen κρω.

such comforts, such joys, such pleasures, as none in the world but believers are capable of.

And, to set home all, these special benefits are proposed by Christ to all sorts of sinners, great and small, old and young; *If any man hear my voice and open the door:* That so no soul might be discouraged from believing, by the greatness or multitude of his sins, but the vilest of sinners may see free grace triumphing over all their unworthiness, upon their consent to take Christ according to the gracious offers of the gospel.

The words thus opened, afford many great and useful points of doctrine, comprehending in them the very sum and substance of the gospel. The first, which ariseth from the solemn and remarkable preface, *Behold*, will be this:

Doct. 1. *That every offer of Christ to the souls of sinners is recorded, and witnessed, with respect to the day of account and reckoning.*

Here we shall enquire into three things,

1. Who are God's witnesses to all gospel tenders.
2. What are the object-matters they witness to.
3. Why God records every offer of Christ, and takes a witness thereof.

I. Who are God's witnesses to all the tenders and offers made of Christ by the gospel, and they will be found to be more than a strict legal number; for,

1. His ministers, by whom he makes them, are all *witnesses* as well as *officers* of Christ to the people. Acts xxvi. 16. "I "have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a "minister and a witness." Here you see ministers have a double office, to propose and offer Christ, and then to bear witness for or against those to whom he is thus offered: they are expressly called God's witnesses, Rev. xi. 6, 7. Their labours witness, their sufferings witness, their solemn appeals to God witness; yea, the very dust of their feet shaken off against the refusers of Christ, turns to a testimony against them, Mark vi. 11. Every groan and sigh, every drop of sweat, much more of blood, are placed in God's book of marginal notes by all their sermons and prayers, and will be produced and read in the great day against all the refusers and despisers of Christ.

2. The gospel itself, which is preached to you, is a testimony or witness for God, for, or against every one that hears it; John xii. 48. "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my "words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spo-"ken, the same shall judge him in the last day." And this is the sense of Christ's word, Matth. xxiv. 14. "And this gospel

" of the kingdom ſhall be preached in all the world, for a wit-
" neſs to all nations, and then ſhall the end come." Ah, Lord, what a ſolemn record is here! every ſermon you hear, yea, every reproof, perſuaſion and conviction, is a witneſs for God to caſt and condemn every ſoul in judgment, that complies not obediently with the calls of the goſpel: ſo many ſermons, ſo many witneſſes.

3. Every man's conſcience is a witneſs for God, that he hath a fair offer once made him: the very conſciences of the Heathens that never ſaw a Bible, that had no other preachers but the ſun, moon, and ſtars, and other works of nature; yet of them the apoſtle ſaith, Rom. ii. 15. " That they ſhew the
" work of the law written in their hearts, their conſcience alſo
" bearing them witneſs, and their thoughts the mean while
" accuſing or excuſing one another." Certainly if ſuch vigour and activity was put into the conſciences of *Heathens*, who could only read the will of God by the dim moon-light of natural reaſon; how much more vigorous and active will conſcience be, in its accuſing office, againſt all that live under the bright beams of goſpel-light? Their conſciences will be ſwift witneſſes, and will ring ſad peals in their ears another day, Ezek. ii. 5. " You ſhall know that there hath been a prophet among
" you." This ſingle witneſs is inſtead of a thouſand witneſſes for God.

4. The examples of all thoſe that do believe and obey the goſpel, are ſo many witneſſes for God, againſt the deſpiſers and neglecters of the great ſalvation. Every mourning trembling ſoul among you is a witneſs againſt all the dead-hearted, unbelieving, diſobedient ones, that ſit with them under the ſame ordinances. Hence it is ſaid, 1 Cor. vi. 2. " Know ye not that
" the ſaints ſhall judge the world?" They ſhall be aſſeſſors with Chriſt in the great day, and condemn the world by their examples, as Noah did the old world. Thus John, Matth. xxi. 32. *came unto you in the way of righteouſneſs, and ye believed him not, but the publicans and harlots believed him; and ye when ye had ſeen it, repented not afterwards that ye might believe him*, q. d. What ſhift did you make to quiet your conſciences, and ſtifle your convictions, when you ſaw *publicans*, the worſt of men, and harlots, the worſt of women, repenting, believing, and hungring after Chriſt! their examples ſhall be your judges. Theſe are God's witneſſes.

II. Next let us conſider what are the *object matters* unto which they give their teſtimony, and that will be found two-fold, according to the two-fold event the goſpel hath upon them

hat hear it; of both which the apoſtle gives this account, Cor. ii. 16. "Unto ſome we are the ſavour of life unto life, and unto others the ſavour of death unto death." Accordingly a double record is made.

1. Of the obedience and faith of ſome, which record will e produced to their joy and comfort in the day of the Lord; *vhen he ſhall come to be glorified in his ſaints, and to be admired n all them that believe; becauſe our teſtimony among you was elieved in that day.* Miniſters are inſtruments of eſpouſing ouls to Chriſt, and witneſſes to thoſe eſpouſals and contracts made betwixt him and them, 2 Cor. xi. 2. Both theſe offices are exceeding grateful and pleaſant to every faithful miniſter.

2. A record is made, and witneſs taken of all the refuſals, diſobedience and ſlightings of Chriſt by others. Thus Moſes will be the accuſer of the Jews, John v. 45. "Do not think I "will accuſe you to the Father; there is one that accuſeth "you, even Moſes, in whom you truſt." This is the ſaddeſt part of a miniſter's work; the fore-thoughts of it are more afflictive than all our labours and ſufferings. There is threefold record made in this caſe: (1.) Of the time men have enjoyed under the means of ſalvation; how many years they have ſat barren and dead-hearted under the labours of God's faithful miniſters; Luke xiii. 7. "Behold theſe three years I "come ſeeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none." Behold, the ſame term of notification with that in the text, applied to the time of God's patience towards them. And again, Jer. xxv. 3. "From the thirteenth year of Joſiah, even unto this "day, (that is, the three and twentieth year) the word of the "Lord hath come unto me, and I have ſpoken unto you riſing "early, and ſpeaking, but ye have not hearkened." O conſider, all the years and days you have ſpent under the goſpel, are upon your doomſday book. (2.) Records are alſo made of all the inſtruments that ever God employed for the converſion and ſalvation of your ſouls. So many miniſters, whether fixed or tranſient, as have ſpent their labours upon you, are upon the book of your account. Jer. xxv. 4. "The Lord hath ſent unto "you all his ſervants, the prophets, riſing early, and ſending "them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear "to hear." They have waſted their lungs, dropt their compaſſionate tears, and burnt down one after another, as candles to direct you to Chriſt and ſalvation, but all in vain. (3.) Every call, perſuaſion and argument, uſed by them to eſpouſe you to Chriſt, is likewiſe upon the book of account. Prov. i. 24, 25. "Becauſe I have called and you refuſed, I have ſtretch-

" ed my hand, and no man regarded, but you have ſet at " nought all my counſels, and would none of my reproofs." Theſe calls and counſels are of too great value with God (though of none with you) to be loſt and left out of your account.

III. We ſhall, in the laſt place, inquire into the grounds and reaſons of theſe judicial procedures of God, why he will have every man's obedience and diſobedience regiſtered, and witneſſed for or againſt him, under goſpel adminiſtrations; and there are two weighty reaſons thereof.

1. That wherever the end of the goſpel is attained in the converſion of any ſoul, that ſoul, and all that were inſtrumentally employed about the ſalvation of it, may have the proper reward and comfort in the great day, 2 Cor. i. 14. " As alſo " you have acknowledged us in part, that we are your rejoi- " cing, even as ye alſo are ours in the day of the Lord Jeſus." This will be matter of joy unſpeakable, both to you that ſhall receive, and to them that ſhall give ſuch a comfortable teſtimony for you. O the joyful congratulations that will be in that day between laborious faithful miniſters, and their believing obedient hearers! Lord, this was the bleſſed inſtrument of my happy illumination and converſion; though I might have ten thouſand inſtructers in Chriſt, yet not many fathers; for by the bleſſing of thy Spirit upon this man's miniſtry, my ſoul was begotten to Chriſt. And, on the other ſide; Lord, theſe are the ſouls for whom I travelled, as in birth, until Chriſt was formed in them. It is a glorious thing to ſay, as the prophet, " Here am I, and the children God hath given me."

Nay, thoſe that were but collaterally uſeful to help on the work of God begun by others, muſt not loſe their reward in that day. John iv. 36. " And he that reapeth receiveth wages, " and gathereth fruit unto eternal life, that both he that ſow- " eth and he that reapeth may rejoice together."

2. Records are now made, and witneſſes taken, that thereby the judicial ſentence of Jeſus Chriſt, in the laſt day may be made clear and perſpicuous to all the world; that every mouth may be ſtopped, and no plea, or apology left in the mouth of any condemned ſinner. For Chriſt, in that day, cometh, Jude 15. *to convince all that are ungodly*; to convince by demonſtration, that all that are Chriſtleſs now, may be found ſpeechleſs then, Matth. xxii. 12. Hence it is ſaid, Pſalm i. 5. *That the wicked ſhall not ſtand, or riſe up in the judgment.* And no wonder, when ſo many full teſtimonies, and unexceptionable witneſſes ſhall come point blank againſt

hem, the minister that preached, the word they preached, their own consciences, and the examples of all believers will be produced against them.

1st Inference. *The undoubted certainty of a day of judgment is hence evinced.* To what purpose else are records made, and witnesses taken, but with respect to an audit-day? This is a truth sealed upon the conscience of the very heathens, Rom. ii. 15. *Their consciences bear witness.* But in vain are all these records made, unless there be a day to produce and plead them; and of that day the prophet Daniel speaks, Dan. vii. 10. "The judgment was set, and the books were opened." And again, Rev. xx. 12. "And I saw the dead, small and great, "stand before God, and the books were opened, and another "book was opened which is the book of life; and the dead "were judged out of those things which were written in the "book, according to their works."

Believe it, friends, these are no devised fables, but most awful and infallible truths: according to the saving effects the gospel now hath, it will be a time of refreshing to our souls, Acts iii. 19. to all others a day of terror, wrath and amazement, 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. "The day in which the Lord Jesus shall "be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming "fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that "obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

2d Inference. *What a spur is here to ministerial diligence and faithfulness?* 'Tis an awful work that is under our hands; the effects of the gospel which we preach, will be the savour of life or death to them that hear us. If the Lord prosper it in our hands, we shall be witnesses for you, it will be an addition to our glory in heaven; Dan. xii. 3. "They that turn many to "righteousness, shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, "and as the stars for ever and ever." But if we be ignorant, lazy, men-pleasers, our people will come in as swift witnesses against us, and their blood will be required at our hands; it will be an intolerable aggravation to our misery in hell, to have any that sat under our ministry thus upbraiding us! *O cruel man! thou savest my soul in danger, and never dealt faithfully and plainly with me; the same time and breath that was spent in idle and worldy discourse, might have been instrumental to have saved me from this place of torment.* Let ministers consider themselves as witnesses for God, and their people as witnesses for or against them; and under that consideration, so study, preach and pray, that they may with Paul take God to record,

that they are free from the blood of all men; no ſort of men upon earth have more ſpurs to diligence and faithfulneſs than we have.

3*d* Inference. *What a pill is this to purge formality out of all that hear us?* Every ſabbath, every ſermon, is recorded in heaven for or againſt your ſouls; at what rate ſoever you attend to the word, all that you hear is ſet down in the book of your account: think not you ſhall return as you came, the word will have its effect and end, it ſhall not return in vain, Iſa. lv. 11. but ſhall accompliſh the end for which it is ſent. The decrees of heaven are executed by the goſpel, ſome ſouls ſhall be quickened, and others ſhall be ſlain by the word of God's mouth. The goſpel is a river of the waters of life, which quickens and refreſhes every thing that lives; but the miry and marſhy places ſhall not be healed. How weighty therefore is that caution of our Lord, Luke viii. 18. *Take heed how you hear!* When you come under an ordinance, you are ſowing ſeed for eternity, which will ſpring up in the world to come. Preaching and hearing may be conſidered two ways, *Phyſically* or *morally*: in the former reſpect, theſe acts are quickly over and paſs away. I ſhall by and by have done preaching, and you hearing; this ſermon will be ended in a little time, but the conſequences thereof will abide for ever. Therefore, for the Lord's ſake, away with formality, no more drowſy eyes or wandering thoughts. O when you come to attend upon the miniſtry of the goſpel, that ſuch thoughts as theſe might prepare your minds! The word I am going to hear will quicken or kill, ſave or damn my ſoul; if I ſit dead under it, and return barren from it, I ſhall wiſh one day that I had never ſeen the face of that miniſter, nor heard his voice that preached it.

4*th* Infer. *What a dreadful condition are all thoſe in that are real and profeſſed enemies to the goſpel; and them that preach it!* That inſtead of embracing and obeying the meſſage of the goſpel, reject and deſpiſe it; inſtead of opening their hearts to receive it, open their blaſphemous mouths againſt it, to deride it, and hiſs it (if it were poſſible) out of the world. Ah, what a book of remembrance is written for ſuch men? I fear there never was an age, ſince Chriſtianity bleſſed this nation, that was more deeply drenched in the guilt of this ſin than the preſent age. How are the meſſengers of the goſpel ſlighted and rejected? What have we done to deſerve it? Is not our caſe this day much like that of the prophet? "Shall evil be recompenſed for good? For they have digged a pit for my ſoul; remember that I ſtood before thee to ſpeak good for them, and

to turn away thy wrath from them," Jer. xviii. 20. What rutiſh madneſs hath poſſeſt the ſouls of theſe men? But, alas! is not ſo much they, as Satan acting in them; he is a jealous prince, the goſpel alarms him, his ſubjects are in danger of revolting from him: no wonder therefore he makes an outcry at the liberty of the goſpel, as is uſed to be made when an enemy invades a kingdom. In this caſe Chriſt directs his miniſters to ſhake off the duſt of their feet for a teſtimony againſt them, Mark vi. 11. The ſignification and meaning whereof is this; that look as you ſhake off the duſt of your feet, even ſo Jeſus Chriſt will ſhake off thoſe men that deſpiſe the goſpel, and abuſe its meſſengers.

5*th* Infer. Hence it likewiſe follows, *That the caſe of the Pagan world will be eaſier in the day of judgment, than theirs that live and die unregenerate and diſobedient under the goſpel of Chriſt.* There are more witneſſes prepared, and records filled againſt the day of your account, than can poſſibly be againſt them: they have abuſed but one talent, the light of nature; but we thouſands, even as many thouſands as we have had opportunities and calls under the goſpel. Upon this account Chriſt ſaith, "Whoſoever ſhall not receive "you, nor hear your words, ſhake off the duſt of your feet. Ver"ily, I ſay unto you, it ſhall be more tolerable for the land of "Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that "city," Matth. x. 14, 15.

Ah, what a fearful aggravation doth it put upon our ſin and miſery, that we are not only accountable for all the light we had, but for all that we might have had in the goſpel-day! Capernaum was lifted up to heaven in the enjoyment of means and precious opportunities, Matth. xi. 23. and had an anſwerable downfal into the depth of miſery from that height of mercy; as the higher any one is lifted up upon a rack, the more terrible is the jerk he receives by the fall.

6*th* Infer. *Laſtly*, Hence it appears, *That the day of judgment muſt certainly take up a vaſt ſpace of time.* For if God will bring every thing into judgment, Eccleſ. xii. 14. not only ſinful actions, but words, Matth. xii. 36. not only words, but heart-ſecrets, Rom. ii. 16. If all the records and regiſters now made, ſhall then be opened and read; all the witneſſes for or againſt every man examined and heard; judge then what a vaſt ſpace of time will that great day take up. Some divines are of opinion it may laſt as long as the world hath laſted; but this is ſure, things will not be huddled up, nor ſhuffled over in haſte;

you have taken your time for sinning, and God will take his time for judging.

Consider the multitudes, multitudes without number, that are to be judged in that day, even all the posterity of Adam, which are as the sand upon the sea-shore; that not only so many persons, but all that they have done, must come into judgment, even the very thoughts of their hearts, which never came to the knowledge of men; their consciences to be interrogated, all other witnesses fully heard and examined: how great a day must this day of the Lord then be?

The second Use.

But the main of this point will be for *exhortation*, that seeing all the offers of Christ are recorded, and witnessed, with respect to a day of account, every one of you would therefore immediately embrace the present gracious tender of Christ in the gospel, as ever you expect to be acquitted and cleared in that great day: take heed of denials, nay of delays and demurs. "For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every "transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of "reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Heb. ii. 2, 3. The question is put, but no answer made; *How shall we escape?* The wisdom of men and angels cannot tell how. To enforce this exhortation, I shall present you with ten weighty considerations upon the matter, which the Lord follow home, by the blessing of his Spirit upon all your hearts.

1. *Consider how invaluable a mercy it is, that you are yet within the reach of offered grace.* The mercies that stand in offer before you this day, were never set before the angels that fell; no *mediator* was ever appointed for them. O astonishing mercy! that those vessels of gold should be cast into everlasting fire, and such clay vessels as we are, thus put into a capacity of greater happiness than ever they fell from; nay, the mercy that stands before you is not only denied to the angels that fell, but to the greatest part of your fellow-creatures, of the same rank and dignity with you: "He sheweth his word to "Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel, he hath "not dealt so with any other nation, and as for his judgments "they have not known them: Praise ye the Lord," Psalm cxlvii. 19, 20. A mercy deservedly celebrated with a joyful *Allelujah*. What vast *tracks* are there in the habitable world, where the name of Christ is unknown! it is your special mercy to be born in a land of bibles and ministers; where it is as dis-

icult for you to avoid and ſhun the light, as it is for others to behold and enjoy it.

2. *Conſider the nature, weight, and worth of the mercies which are this day freely offered you.* Certainly they are mercies of the firſt rank, the moſt ponderous, precious, and neceſſary among all the mercies of God. Chriſt the firſt-born of mercies, and in him pardon, peace, and eternal ſalvation are ſet before you: it were aſtoniſhing to ſee a ſtarving man refuſing offered bread, or a condemned man a gracious pardon. Lord! what compoſitions of ſloth and ſtupidity are we, that we ſhould need ſo many intreaties to be happy.

3. *Conſider who it is that makes theſe gracious tenders of pardon, peace, and ſalvation, to you; even that God whom you have ſo deeply wronged, whoſe laws you have violated, whoſe mercies you have ſpurned, and whoſe wrath you have juſtly incenſed.* His patience groans under the burden of your daily provocations; he loſes nothing if you be damned, and receives no benefit if you be ſaved; yet the firſt motions of mercy and ſalvation to you freely ariſe out of his grace and good pleaſure. God intreats you to be reconciled, 2 Cor. v. 20. The bleſſed Lord Jeſus, whoſe blood thy ſins have ſhed, now freely offers that blood for thy reconciliation, juſtification, and ſalvation, if thou wilt but ſincerely accept him ere it be too late.

4. *Reflect ſeriouſly upon your own vileneſs, to whom ſuch gracious offers of peace and mercy are made.* Thy ſins have ſet thee at as great a diſtance from the hopes and expectations of pardon, as any ſinner in the world. Conſider man, what thou haſt been, what thou haſt done, and what vaſt heaps of guilt thou haſt contracted by a life of ſin; and yet that unto thee pardon and peace ſhould be offered in Chriſt after ſuch a life of rebellion, how aſtoniſhing is the mercy! the Lord is contented to paſs by all thy former rebellions, thy deep-dyed tranſgreſſions, and to ſign an act of oblivion for all that is paſt, if now at laſt thy heart relent for ſin, and thy will bow in obedience to the great commands and calls of the goſpel, Iſaiah lv. 2, *&c.* and i. 18.

5. *Conſider how many offers of mercy you have already refuſed, and that every refuſal is recorded againſt you:* how long have you tried, and even tried the patience of God already, and that this may be the laſt overture of grace that ever God will make to your ſouls. Certainly there is an offer that will be the laſt offer, a ſtriving of the Spirit which will be his laſt ſtriving; and after that no more offers without

you, no more motions or ſtrivings within you, for evermore. The treaty is then ended, and your laſt neglect or rejection of Chriſt recorded againſt the day of your account; and what if this ſhould prove to be that laſt tender of grace which muſt conclude the treaty betwixt Chriſt and you! what undone wretches muſt you then be, with whom ſo gracious a treaty breaks off upon ſuch dreadful terms.

6. *Conſider well the reaſonable, mild, and gracious nature of the goſpel-terms, on which life and pardon are offered to you,* Acts xx. 21. The goſpel requires nothing of you but repentance and faith. Can you think it hard when a prince pardons a rebel, to require him to fall upon his knees, and ſtretch forth a willing and thankful hand to receive his pardon? Your repentance and faith are much of the ſame nature. Here is no legal ſatisfaction required at your hands, no reparation of the injured law by your doings or ſufferings, but a hearty ſorrow for ſins committed, ſincere purpoſes and endeavours after new obedience, and a hearty, thankful acceptation of Chriſt your Saviour; and, for your encouragement herein, his Spirit ſtands ready to furniſh you with powers and abilities; "Turn "you at my reproof, behold I will pour out my Spirit unto you, "I will make known my words unto you," Prov. i. 23. And Iſaiah xxvi. 12. "Lord, thou haſt wrought all our works "in us."

7. Again. *Conſider how your way to Chriſt, by repentance and faith, is beaten before you, by thouſands of ſinners, for your encouragement.* You are not the firſt that ever adventured your ſouls in this path: multitudes are gone before you, and that under as much guilt, fear, and diſcouragement, as you that come after can pretend unto; and not a man among them repulſed or diſcouraged: here they have found reſt and peace to their weary ſouls, Heb. iv. 3. Acts xiii. 39. Here the greateſt of ſinners have been ſet forth for an enſample to you that ſhould afterwards believe on his name, 1 Tim. i. 16. You ſee if you will not, others will joyfully accept the offers of Chriſt; what diſcouragements have you that they had not? Or what greater encouragements had they which God hath not given you this day? therefore they ſhall be your judges.

8. *Conſider the great hazard of theſe precious ſeaſons you now enjoy.* Opportunity is the golden ſpot of time, but it is *tempus labile*, a very ſlippery and uncertain thing: great and manifold are the hazards and contingencies attending it. Your life is immediately uncertain, your breath continually going in your noſtrils; and that which is every moment going, will be gone

at last. The gospel is as uncertain as your life; God hath made no such settlement of it, but that he may at pleasure remove it, and will certainly do so, if we thus trifle under it; 'tis but a candlestick, tho' a golden one, Rev. ii. 5. and that you all know is a moveable thing; and not only your life, and the means of your eternal life, I mean the gospel, are uncertain things; but even the motions and strivings of the Spirit with your souls are as uncertain as either. "Work out your own "salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God that worketh "in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. ii. 12, 13. That God now works with you, is matter of great encouragement to your work: but that he works at his own pleasure, as a free arbitrary agent, who can cease when he pleases, and never give but one knock at your hearts more, should make you work with fear and trembling.

9. *Think what a fearful aggravation it will be, both of your sin and misery, to perish in the sight and presence of an offered remedy; to sink into hell betwixt the outstretched arms of a compassionate Redeemer, that would have gathered you, but you would not.*

Heathens, yea devils will upbraid you in hell for such unaccountable folly and desperate madness: heathens will say, Alas, we had but the dim moon-light of nature, which did indeed discover sin, but not Christ the remedy. Ah, had your preachers and your bibles been sent among us, how gladly would we have embraced them! surely saith God to Ezekiel, "had I sent "thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee," Ezek. iii. 5, 6, Matth. xi. 21. The very devils will upbraid you; O if God had sent a Mediator in our nature, we had never rejected him as you have done; but he took not on him the nature of angels.

10. Lastly, *How clear as well as sure, will your condemnation be in the great day, against whom such a cloud of witnesses will appear!* O how manifest will the righteousness of God be! men and angels shall applaud the sentence, and your own consciences shall acknowledge the equity of it. You that are *Christless* now, will be *speechless* then, Matth. xxii. 11. "Knowing therefore the terrors of the Lord, I persuade men," 2 Cor. v. 11. as one that trembles to think of being summoned as a witness against any of your souls. O that I might be your rejoicing, and you mine in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

SERMON II.

REV. iii. 20. *Behold* [*I*] *ſtand at the door*, &c.

HAVING, in the former ſermon, pondered Chriſt's ſolemn preface to his earneſt ſuit; the next thing that comes under our conſideration, is *the perſon ſolliciting*, and pleading for admiſſion into the hearts of ſinners, which is Chriſt himſelf.

Behold [*I*] *ſtand.* The only difficulty here is rightly to apprehend the manner of Chriſt's preſence in goſpel adminiſtrations: for it is manifeſt the perſon of Chriſt was at this time in heaven; his bodily preſence was removed from this lower world above ſixty years before this epiſtle was written to the Laodiceans. John's baniſhment into Patmos is by Euſebius, out of Irenæus and Clemens Alexandrinus, placed in the fourteenth year of the emperor Domitian, and under his ſecond perſecution, which was about the ninety-ſeventh year from the birth of Chriſt.

Yet here he ſaith, *Behold I ſtand;* not my meſſengers and miniſters only, but I by my ſpiritual preſence among you, I your ſovereign Lord and owner, who have all right and authority by creation and redemption to poſſeſs and diſpoſe of your ſouls; it is I that ſtand at the door and knock, I by my Spirit, ſolliciting and moving by the miniſtry of men. You ſee none but men; but believe it, I am really and truly, though ſpiritually and inviſibly, preſent in all thoſe adminiſtrations; all thoſe knocks, motions, and ſollicitations, are truly mine, they are my acts, and I own them, and ſo I would have you conceive and apprehend them. Hence the ſecond *note* is this,

Doct. 2. *That Jeſus Chriſt is truly preſent with men in his ordinances, and hath to do with them, and they with him; though he be not viſible to their carnal eyes.*

Thus runs the promiſe: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midſt of them," Mat. xviii. 20. The middle place was the ſeat of the *preſident* in the Jewiſh aſſemblies, where he might equally hear and be heard of all. So will I be in the midſt of the aſſemblies of the faithful, met together in my name and authority, to bleſs, guide, and protect them. Hence the church is called the place of his feet, Iſaiah xvi. 13. a manifeſt alluſion to the ark, called God's footſtool, Pſalm xcix. 5. And agreeably hereunto, Chriſt is ſaid to walk among the ſeven golden candle-

ſticks, Rev. ii. 1. There are the ſpiritual walks of Chriſt, there his converſes and communion with men: and this preſence of Chriſt was not the peculiar privilege of the firſt churches, but is common to all the churches of the ſaints to the end of the world, as appears by that glorious promiſe ſo comfortably extended to the church from firſt to laſt; "Lo, I am "with you always to the end of the world," Mat. xxii. *ult.* This promiſe is the ground and reaſon of all our faith, and expectations of benefit from ordinances; and the ſubjects of it are not here conſidered *perſonally* but *officially*, to you, and all that ſucceed you in the ſame work and office; not to you only as *extraordinary*, but to all the ſucceeding *ordinary* ſtanding officers in my church. As for the apoſtles, neither their perſons nor extraordinary office was to continue long, but this promiſe was to continue to the end of the world.

Nor is this promiſe made abſolutely, but conditionally; the connection of the promiſe with the command, enforces this qualified ſenſe; as 2 Chron. xv. 2. "The Lord is with you, "whilſt you are with him." Ignorant, idle, unqualified perſons cannot claim the benefit of this gracious grant.

Once more, this promiſe is made to every hour and minute of time. I am with you, *all the days*, as it is in the Greek *text*; in dark and dangerous, as well as peaceable and encouraging days: and it is cloſed up with a ſolemn *Amen*, *So be it*, or, So it ſhall be.

To open this point diſtinctly, we are to conſider that there is a three-fold preſence of Chriſt.

1. Corporeal. 2. Repreſented. 3. Spiritual.

1. There is a corporeal preſence of Chriſt, which the church once enjoyed on earth, when he went in and out amongſt his people, Acts i. 21. when their eyes ſaw him, and their hands handled him, 1 John i. 1. This preſence was a ſingular conſolation to the diſciples, and therefore they were greatly dejected when it was to be removed from them. But after redemption-work was finiſhed on earth, this bodily preſence was no longer neceſſary to be continued in this world, but more expedient to be removed to heaven, John xvi. 7. as indeed it was, and muſt there abide until the time of the reſtitution of all things, Acts iii. 21. And in this reſpect he tells the diſciples, John xvi. 28. "I leave the world, and go to my Father."

2. There is a repreſented preſence of Chriſt in ordinances. As the perſon of a king is repreſented in another country by his *Ambaſſadors*, ſo is Chriſt in this world by his miniſters:

" We then are ambaſſadors for God; as tho' God did beſeech " you by us, we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead be ye reconciled to " God," 2 Cor. v. 20. Chriſt is about other work for us in heaven, but we ſtand in his ſtead on earth. And this ſpeaks the great dignity of the miniſterial office; whatever abuſes or contempts are caſt on them, they reflect upon Chriſt: " He " that deſpiſeth you, deſpiſeth me," Luke x. 16. It alſo teacheth us whence the validity of goſpel-adminiſtration is; Chriſt ratifies and confirms them with his own authority. It alſo inſtructs us how wiſe, ſpiritual, and holy miniſters ſhould be, who repreſent Chriſt to the world. A drunkard, a perſecutor, a ſenſual worldling, is but an ill repreſentative of the bleſſed and holy Jeſus.

3. Beſides, and above the two former, there is a ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt in the churches, and ordinances; and this preſence of Chriſt by his ſpirit, who is his *Vicegerent*, is to be conſidered as that from which all goſpel-ordinances derive,

1. Their beauty and glory.
2. Their power and efficacy.
3. Their awful ſolemnity.
4. Their continuance and ſtability.

1. From the preſence of Chriſt by his Spirit, the ordinances and churches derive their beauty and glory: " To ſee thy pow- " er and thy glory, ſo as I have ſeen thee in the ſanctuary," Pſal. xxvii. 4. Look as the beauty of the body is a reſult from the ſoul that animates it; and when the ſoul is gone, the beauty of the body is gone alſo; ſo the beauty and glory of all ordinances comes and goes with the Spirit of Chriſt, which is the very ſoul of them. The churches are indeed golden candleſticks, but the candleſtick hath no light but what the candle gives it; hence that magnificent deſcription of the new temple is cloſed up in this expreſſion, " The name of that city ſhall be, The " Lord is there," Ezek. xlviii. *ult.*

2. From this ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt, all goſpel-ordinances derive all that power and efficacy which is by them exerted upon the ſouls of men, either in their converſion or edification. This power is not inherent in them, nor do they act as natural, neceſſary agents, but as inſtituted means, which are ſucceſsful, or unſucceſsful according as Chriſt by his ſpirit co-operates with them: " He that plants is nothing, neither he that " watereth, but God that giveth the increaſe," 1 Cor. iii. 7. That is, they are nothing to the purpoſe, nothing to the accompliſhment of mens ſalvation, without the concurrence of the Spirit of Chriſt. For when the apoſtle makes himſelf and Apollos,

with all other miniſters, nothing, we muſt underſtand him ſpeaking not abſolutely, but comparatively, and relatively; they are neceſſary in their places, and ſufficient in their kind, for what they are appointed to, elſe it would be a reflection upon the wiſdom of God that inſtituted them: But ſingly in themſelves, and disjunctively conſidered, they are nothing; as a trumpet or wind-inſtrument is nothing, as to its end and uſe, except breath be inſpired into it, and that breath modulated by the art and ſkill of the inſpirer; like Ezekiel's wheels that move not but as the Spirit that was in them moved, and dir-ted their motions. If ordinances wrought upon ſouls naturally, and neceſſarily, as the fire burneth, then they could not fail of ſucceſs upon all that come under them: But it is with them as with the waters of the pool at Bethesda, whoſe healing virtue was only found at that ſeaſon when the angel deſcended and troubled them.

3. This ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt gives the ordinances of the goſpel that awful ſolemnity which is due, upon that account, to them. The preſence of Chriſt in them commands reverence from all that are about him. "God is greatly to be feared in "the aſſemblies of his ſaints, and to be had in reverence of all "that are round about him:" hence is that ſolemn caution or threatening, Lev. xxvi. 23, 24. "If you walk contrary unto "me, then will I alſo walk contrary unto you." The Hebrew word in that text ſignifies to walk raſhly, or at an adventure with God, *ſine perſonæ diſcrimine*, without conſidering with whom we have to do, and what an awful majeſty we ſtand before. And the puniſhment is ſuitable to the ſin; I alſo will walk at an adventure with you, making no diſcrimination in my judgments betwixt your perſons and the perſons of the worſt of men. O that this were duely conſidered by all that have to do with God in goſpel-inſtitutions!

4. It is the ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt in his churches and ordinances that gives them their continuance and ſtability: whenever the Spirit of Chriſt departs from them, it will not be long before they depart from us; or if they ſhould not, their continuance will be little to our advantage. When the glory of the LORD diſmounted from betwixt the cherubims, when that ſad voice was heard in the temple, *migremus hinc*, Let us go hence, how ſoon was both city and temple made a deſolation! and truly Chriſt's preſence is not ſo fixed to any place, or any ordinances, but the ſins of the people may baniſh it away, Rev. ii. 5. Who will tarry in any place longer than he is welcome, if he have any where elſe to go?

But more particularly, let us here diſcuſs theſe two points.

I. How it appears Chriſt is thus ſpiritually preſent with his churches and ordinances.

II. Why it is neceſſary he ſhould be ſo.

Firſt, By what evidences doth it manifeſtly appear that there is ſuch a preſence of Chriſt with his churches and ordinances. And this will appear by two undeniable evidences thereof.

1. By their wonderful preſervations.

2. From their ſupernatural effects.

1. From their wonderful preſervations: For it is wholly unaccountable, and unconceivable, how the churches, miniſters and ordinances, ſhould be ſupported and preſerved without it, amidſt ſuch hoſts of potent and enraged enemies. If Chriſt were not among them, they had certainly been ſwallowed up long ago. It is he that holds the ſtars in his right-hand, Rev. ii. 1. His walks among the ſeven golden candleſticks is their beſt ſecurity. The burning buſh, Exod. iii. 3. is a rare emblem to open this myſtery; the buſh burned with fire, but was not conſumed. The *buſh* was a reſemblance of the church of God in Egypt, the *flames* upon it was their terrible perſecution; the *wonder*, that no aſhes appeared as the effects of thoſe terrible flames; the *reaſon* whereof was, God was in the buſh, Jeſus Chriſt was in the midſt of his people.

By virtue of this preſence we are here this day, in the enjoyment of goſpel liberties; no ſociety of men in the world have ſuch ſecurity as the church hath upon this account. The mightieſt monarchies have been overturned, no policies nor human power could preſerve them; but the church and ordinances are ſtill preſerved, and ſhall ever be, by virtue of that gracious promiſe, Jer. xxx. 11. "For I am with thee, ſaith the Lord, "to ſave thee: Though I make a full end of all nations whi-"ther I have ſcattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of "thee."

The Babylonians, Perſians, Grecian monarchies, have deſtroyed and ruined one another:

——————— *Sic Medus ademit*

Aſſyrio, Syroque tulit moderamina Perſes, &c.

but ſtill the church of Chriſt lifts up its head, and beholds their ruins.

2. This preſence of Chriſt in and with his ordinances is undeniably evinced from their ſupernatural effects upon the ſouls of men, 2 Cor. x. 4. "The weapons of our warfare are not "carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of "ſtrong holds." It is the Spirit of Chriſt that gives them their

ſucceſs and efficacy; the ſword of the goſpel hath its point and edge, but it is impoſſible the heart of a ſtupid hardened ſinner ſhould ever be pricked or wounded by it, if the Spirit of Chriſt did not manage it. When ſinners fall down convinced under the authority of the word, they feel, and readily acknowledge, that God is in it of a truth, 1 Cor. xiv. 25. Ruffinus reports, that at the council of Nice, a godly man, of no great learning, was the inſtrument of converting a learned philoſopher, whom the *biſhops* with all their arguments could not perſuade: of which the *philoſopher* himſelf gave this remarkable account, 'Whilſt you reaſoned with me, ſaid he, againſt words, 'I oppoſed words, and what was ſpoken I overthrew by the 'art of ſpeaking; but when inſtead of words power came out 'of the mouth of the ſpeaker, words could no longer with-'ſtand truth, nor man reſiſt the power of God.'

And this, indeed, is the true and juſt account of all thoſe marvellous and gracious changes made upon the ſouls of men by the preaching of the goſpel: can the vaniſhing breath of a dying man, think you, inſpire ſpiritual and eternal life into the ſouls of other men? Can he ſearch the conſcience, break the heart, and bow the will at this rate? No, no, this is the power and operation of Chriſt; and of that preſence we muſt ſay, ſaith a * reverend author, as Martha did to her Saviour concerning the death of her brother Lazarus, John xi. 21. "Lord, if thou hadſt been here, my brother had not died." So ſay I, if that preſence and power of Chriſt were felt by all, which hath been certainly experienced and felt by many, they had not remained in the ſtate of ſpiritual death as they do. But though there be thouſands under ordinances that never felt this power of Chriſt upon them, yet bleſſed be God there are alſo multitudes of witneſſes and evidences of this truth, that there is a real, ſpiritual energetical preſence of Chriſt in his own appointments; which was the firſt thing to be evinced.

Secondly, The ſecond thing requiring explication, is the uſes and ends which make ſuch a preſence of Chriſt neceſſary. And they are,

1. To preſerve and ſupport his miniſters and churches, amidſt ſuch hoſts of potent and enraged enemies: this preſence of Chriſt, is as a wall of fire round about them. It was the divine preſence with Jeremiah that was as a life-guard to him againſt the rage of the princes and nobles of Iſrael: Jer. xv. 20, 21. "I will make thee to this people a fenced brazen wall,

* Mr. Burgeſs on 1 Cor. iii.

" and they ſhall fight againſt thee, but they ſhall not prevail " againſt thee; for I am with thee to ſave thee, and to deliver " thee, ſaith the Lord: and I will deliver thee out of the hand " of the wicked, and I will redeem thee out of the hand of the " terrible."

It was eaſier for the Roman army to ſcale the walls, and batter down the towers of Jeruſalem, than for all the enemies in Jeruſalem to deſtroy this prophet of God, thus immured by the divine preſence. Athanaſius and Luther had the power of the empire ingaged againſt them, yet the preſence of Chriſt was their ſecurity. The witneſſes could not be ſlain till they had finiſhed their teſtimony, Rev. xi. 7. To this preſence alone the faithful witneſſes of Chriſt owe their marvellous preſervation at this day; had not Chriſt ſaid, *Lo, I am with you*, you had not ſaid at this day, *behold our miniſters are ſtill with us.*

2. The preſence of Chriſt is neceſſary to aſſiſt and enable his miniſters in their work, for it is a work quite above their own ſtrength; it is well we are workers together with God, elſe we ſhould ſoon faint under our labours. When Moſes objected, *I am not eloquent*, the Lord told him, *I will be with thy mouth*, Exod. iv. 10. When God guides the tongue, how powerful and perſuaſive muſt the language be! when the apoſtles, illiterate men, were ſent out to convert the world, Chriſt promiſed to give them *a mouth and wiſdom*, Luke xxi. 15. a mouth to ſpeak, and wiſdom to guide that mouth; and then their words were demonſtrations, all their adverſaries could not reſiſt that Spirit and power by which they ſpake. Empires, and kingdoms full of enemies, received the goſpel; but the reaſon of this wonderful ſucceſs is given us in Mark xvi. 20. " They " went out and preached every where, the Lord working with " them." 'Tis ſweet and proſperous working in fellowſhip with Chriſt: the ſpirit of Chriſt gives a manifold aſſiſtance to his miniſters in their work; 'tis he that guides and directs their mind in the choice of thoſe ſubjects wherein they labour with ſuch ſucceſs to their hearers. He dictates the matter, influences their affections, guides their lips, follows home their doctrine with ſucceſs. And this is a ſpecial uſe and end of Chriſt's preſence with his miniſters and ordinances.

3. The ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt is neceſſary for the preparation and opening of the peoples heart to receive and embrace the goſpel to ſalvation; not a heart will open to receive Chriſt till the Spirit of Chriſt unlock them. Paul and Timothy were extraordinarily called to preach the goſpel at Macedonia, there Lydia was converted; but how? Not by their ſkill or eloquence,

but by the Spirit's influence; "The Lord opened the heart of "Lydia," Acts xvi. 14. The church could not be propagated without converſion; converſion could never be wrought without Chriſt's influence and ſpiritual preſence. So that this preſence is of abſolute neceſſity; the church cannot ſubſiſt, nor the great ends of ordinances be attained without it.

Infer. 1. 'Is Chriſt really preſent in all goſpel adminiſtrations, how awfully ſolemn then is every part of goſpel worſhip? 'we having to do with Chriſt himſelf, and not with men only, 'in goſpel ordinances.' Happy were it, if, under this conſideration, all our people did receive the word we preach, as the Theſſalonians did, 1 Theſſ. ii. 13. not as the word of man, but as the word of God; then it would work effectually in us as it did in them. But alas! we have looſe and low apprehenſions of the word; we come to judge the gifts of the ſpeaker, not to have our minds informed, our conſciences ſearched, our luſts mortified, and our lives regulated. But O that men would realize the preſence of Chriſt in ordinances, and ſeriouſly conſider that word of his, Rev. ii. 23. "All the churches ſhall know "that I am he which ſearcheth the reins and hearts, and I will "give to every one of you according to your works."

How would it compoſe vain and wandering hearts unto holy ſerioufneſs? O if men would but conſider that they are before the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, as Cornelius and his family did, Acts x. 33. "We are all here preſent before God, to hear all things "that are commanded thee of God." If they would conſider the word, as the executioner of God's eternal decrees, which returns not in vain, but accompliſhes that whereunto God ſends it, Iſa. lv. 11. and eventually proves the ſavour of life or death eternal to them that ſit under it, 2. Cor. ii. 16. In a word, were it but conſidered as the rule by which its hearers ſhall be judged in the great day, John xii. 48. then how would men tremble at the word? What mighty effects would it have upon their hearts? How would it run and be glorified? But, alas, as Job ſpeaks, Job ix. 11. "He goeth by me, and I ſee him not; "he paſſeth on alſo; but I perceive him not." Few realize the ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt in ordinances.

Infer. 2. If Chriſt be really preſent with his churches and ordinances, 'How vain are all attempts of enemies to ſubvert and 'deſtroy them?' That promiſe, Matth. xxviii. *ult.* ſuppoſes the continuance of a goſpel church miniſtry to the end of the world, elſe there would be a promiſe without a ſubject: as *de Jure*, there ought to be a church, ſo *de Facto*, there ſhall be a church with miniſters, and ordinances, let Satan and antichriſt

do their worſt. I do not ſay this promiſe ſecures this or that particular church or nation, for the preſence of Chriſt is moveable from one place to another, but ſtill the church is ſafe. And there are three things that ſecure it againſt all hazards.

1. The invaluable treaſures God hath lodged in the church, *viz.* his *Truths*, his *Worſhip*, and his *Elect*; ſuch a precious cargo ſecures the veſſel that carries it, whatever ſtorms or tempeſts may befal it.

2. The covenant and promiſe of God with the church, is its abundant ſecurity, Matth. xvi. 18. "Upon this rock will I build "my church, and the gates of hell ſhall not prevail againſt it." The faithfulneſs of God is pawned for his peoples ſecurity. If the church fail, God's faithfulneſs muſt fail with it.

3. But above all, the preſence of Chriſt, in the midſt of it, puts it out of all danger of miſcarrying. In that promiſe, *Lo, I am with you alway*, are found all munitions and fortifications whatſoever: here we have his eye of providence, his hand of power, and whatſoever elſe is needful to ſupport and ſecure it. God accounts his preſence our ſafety, Iſaiah xli. 10. The enemies of God and his people account it ſo too, Exod. xiv. 25; and ſhall it not be ſo in our account? Provoke not the Lord Jeſus to withdraw his preſence, and fear not the conſultations and oppoſitions of hell or earth.

Infer. 3. *From this ſpiritual preſence of Chriſt all his faithful miniſters ſhould draw encouragement, amidſt the manifold difficulties and diſcouragements they daily encounter in this work and ſervice.* Chriſt is with them, they work in fellowſhip with him, let them not be diſmayed.

The difficulties and diſcouragements the miniſters of Chriſt meet with are great and many; and the more faithful and ſucceſsful any of them are in their maſter's work, the fiercer oppoſition they muſt expect: beſides, all the diſcouragements riſing out of their own hearts, which are not a few, they muſt encounter.

Firſt, The oppoſition of enemies from abroad. *Secondly*, The obſtinacy and ſtubbornneſs of the hearts they work upon. Satan is a jealous prince, and will raiſe all manner of outcries and oppoſition againſt thoſe heavenly *Heralds*, that come to proclaim a new prince in his dominions, and withdraw his miſerable ſubjects from their curſed allegiance to him. What is it to preach the goſpel (ſaid Luther) but to drive the fury of the world upon the head of that preacher? But this would be eaſily ſupportable, did our work but proſper, upon the hearts of our hearers. But this, alas! is the killing conſideration of

all; we know the worth of ſouls, and how great a ſervice it is to ſave them from death, James v. 20. We alſo know the terrors of the Lord, which excite our utmoſt endeavours to perſuade men, 2 Cor. v. 11. We feel the compaſſions of Chriſt ſtirring in our own bowels, which makes us long after their ſalvation, Phil. i. 8. We preach, we pray, yea, we travail again as it were in birth until Chriſt be formed in them, Gal. iv. 19. And when we have done all, we find their hearts as iron, and braſs, Jer. vi. 28. We mourn in ſecret when we cannot prevail, and oft times our hands hang down with diſcouragement, and we are ready to ſay with the prophet, Jer. xx. 9. *We will ſpeak no more in his name.* But here is our relief, under all diſcouragements from abroad and at home; the work is Chriſt's, the power is his, he is with us, and we are workers together with him. There was a time when three thouſand ſouls were born to Chriſt at one ſermon, it may be now three thouſand ſermons may be preached and not a ſoul converted: yet let us not be diſcouraged, a time of eminent converſion is promiſed, and to be expected in theſe latter days, Ezek. xlvii. 9. when the living waters of the goſpel ſhall make every thing to live whither they come, and when the fiſhers, *i. e.* the miniſters Chriſt, ſhall not fiſh with angels, as now they do, taking now one, then another ſingle convert, but ſhall ſpread forth their nets, and incloſe multitudes at a draught: "when they ſhall fly as a cloud, and as the doves to "their windows." God now opens a door of opportunity beyond expectation; O that the hearts of miniſters and people were ſuitably enlarged, and the people made willing in the day of his power.

Infer. 4. *Hence we alſo infer the great dignity of the miniſterial office, and the ſuitable reſpect and honour due to all Chriſt's faithful miniſters.* The Lord Jeſus himſelf is repreſented by them, they ſtand in his ſtead, 2 Cor. v. 20. his authority is clothed upon them; the honours and diſhonour given them, redound to the perſon of Chriſt. The Galatians received Paul as an angel of God, even as Chriſt Jeſus, Gal. iv. 14.

Yet how have their perſons and office been vilified and deſpiſed in this degenerate age! how many learned, pious, laborious, peaceful miniſters of Chriſt have, in this age, been hunted up and down in the world as wild beaſts, been made the filth and off-ſcouring of all things unto this day? 1 Cor. iv. 13. The word ſignifies that dirt and filth which Scavengers rake together in the ſtreets, to be carried to the dunghill,

No doubt but Satan drives a great deſign in this to invalidate their miniſtry, diſcourage their labours, and break their hearts: but Jeſus Chriſt will ſupport us under all theſe abuſes, wipe off the dirt thrown at us for his name ſake, and reſerve ſome of us for better days.

Infer. 5. *Is Chriſt preſent in his ordinances, what a ſtrong engagement then lies upon you all to attend and wait aſſiduouſly upon the miniſtry of the word, and to bring all yours, that are capable, there to wait upon Chriſt with you?* We read in the days of Chriſt's fleſh, when he performed his miraculous cures upon the ſick, what thronging there was after him; how parents brought their children, maſters their ſervants, preſſing in multitudes, untiling the houſe to let down their ſick to him, Luke xii. 1. Ah, ſhall men be ſo earneſt for a cure for their bodies, and ſo indifferent for their ſouls? 'Tis true, the ſpirit of Chriſt is not tied by any neceſſity to act always with the word; he acts as an arbitrary agent, John iii. 8. *The wind bloweth where it liſteth*: but it is engagement enough to wait continually upon his ordinances, that he ſometimes graciouſly, and effectually concurreth with them. 'Tis good to lie in the way of the Spirit; and there is a bleſſing pronounced upon them that wait continually at his gates, Prov. viii. 34. O therefore neglect no ſeaſon within your reach; for who knows but it may be the ſeaſon of life to thy ſoul?

Infer. 6. *What an unſpeakable loſs is the loſs of the goſpel, ſeeing the preſence of Chriſt comes and goes with it?* When the goſpel departs, the ſpirit of Chriſt departs with it from among men; no more converſions, in God's ordinary way, are then to be expected: well therefore might the Lord ſay, Hoſea ix. 12. *Woe to them when I depart from them.* The ſpirit may, in ſome ſenſe, depart, whilſt the ordinances are left ſtanding, for a time, among the people; but then expect no ſuch bleſſings or benefits from them. But when God takes away ordinances and ſpirit too, woe indeed to that people; and are there not ſins amongſt us preſaging ſuch a judgment? O England! reflect upon thy barrenneſs under it; where be the fruits anſwerable to ſuch precious means? The goſpel is a golden lamp, the graces of the ſpirit communicated by it are golden oil; as in that ſtately viſion, Zech. iv. Will God maintain ſuch a lamp, fed with ſuch precious oil, for men to trifle and play by?

And no leſs ominous and portentous is that bitter enmity to the goſpel, and the ſerious profeſſors of it, which (I cannot ſpeak without horror) is every where found among us; this

great hatred brings on the days of visitation, and the days of recompence, with a swift and dreadful motion upon any people, Hosea ix. 7.

Infer. 7. *If Christ be present, by way of spirit and energy in his ordinances, then there is no reason to despair of the conversion and salvation of the greatest sinners that yet lie dead under the gospel.* What though their hearts be hard, their understanding dark, and their wills never so perverse and obstinate? all must give way, and open in the day of Christ's power, when his spirit joins himself with the word. This makes it an irresistible word; 'tis glorious to observe the hearts of publicans and harlots opening and yielding to the voice of Christ, Matth. xxi. 31. What were those three thousand persons pricked at the heart by Peter's sermon, Acts ii. 36. but the very men that, with wicked hands, had crucified the Lord Jesus? And what were the converted Corinthians, but *idolators*, turned from dumb idols, *whoremongers, adulterers, effeminate?* &c. 1 Cor. xii. 2. and vi. 11. God hath his elect among the vilest of men: the gospel will find them out, and draw them home to Christ, when the spirit animates and blesseth it. Well might the apostle therefore say, that the gospel preached with the holy Ghost, sent down from heaven, is an object worthy for angels to behold with admiration, 1 Pet. i. 12. What though Satan has strongly fortified their souls against Christ, with ignorance, prejudice and enmity; yet the weapons of our warfare are mighty, through God, to pull down these strong holds. Despair not therefore of your carnal and dead-hearted relations, bring them to the gospel upon the encouragement of these words of Christ, John v. 25. "The hour cometh, yea, and now is, that the dead "shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear it "shall live."

Infer. 8. *Is Christ spiritually present in his ordinances? O then what an endeared affection should every gracious soul bear to the ordinances of God!* They are the walks of Christ, and his spirit, the appointed times and places for your meeting and communion with him; there your souls first met with Christ; there you began your acquaintance with him; there you have had many sweet converses with him since that day; they were the seed of your regeneration, 1 Pet. i. 23. the bread of life, by which your souls have been sustained ever since, and therefore to be more esteemed by you than your necessary food, Job xxiii. 12. Here you have found the richest cordials to revive and recover your drooping spirits, when ready to sink away in a faint

ſit under ſin within you, and afflictions upon you. No wonder David's ſoul even fainted for the courts of God, Pſal. cxix. 50. and that Hezekiah deſired a ſign on his ſick bed, that he ſhould go up to the houſe of the Lord. Here are the choiceſt comforts of the ſaints upon earth; all our freſh ſprings are in Zion, Pſal. lxxxvii. 7. What a dungeon, what a barren wilderneſs were this world without them! Prize the ordinances, love the ordinances, wait aſſiduouſly upon the ordinances, and pray for the liberty and efficacy of the goſpel, that it may ſet no more in your days, nor in the days of your poſterity.

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SERMON III.

REVEL. iii. 20. *Behold I [ſtand] at the door and knock; &c.*

HAVING finiſhed Chriſt's ſolemn preface, and cleared the manner of his preſence in his churches and ordinances; I now come to a third obſervation which is neceſſarily implied in theſe words, "Behold I ſtand at the door and knock;" and that ſad truth therein implied is this,

Doct. *That the hearts of men are naturally locked up, and faſt barred againſt Jeſus Chriſt their only Saviour.*

If it were not ſo, what need were there of all that pains and patience, uſed and exerciſed by Chriſt, in waiting patiently, and knocking importunately for entrance into the hearts of men? To keep a clear method in this point, three things muſt be ſtated in the doctrinal part.

1. How it appears the hearts of men are thus ſhut up.
2. What are thoſe locks and bars that ſhut them up.
3. That no power of man can remove theſe bars.

Firſt, That all hearts are naturally ſhut and made faſt againſt Chriſt, is a ſad but certain truth; we read, John i. 11, 12, "He "came unto his own, and his own received him not," *&c.* He came unto his own people, from whoſe ſtock he ſprung up; a people to whom he had been prefigured in all the ſacrifices and types of the law, and in whom they might all clearly diſcern the accompliſhment of them all. His doctrines and his miracles plainly told them who he was, and whence he came; yet few diſcerned or received him as the Son of God. Chriſt found the doors of mens hearts generally ſhut againſt him, ſave only a few whoſe hearts were opened by the Almighty power of God, in the way of faith, ver. 12. Theſe indeed received him, but all

the reſt excluded and denied entrance to the Son of God. So again, John v. from ver. 33, to 40. Chriſt reaſons with them, and gives undeniable demonſtrations, that he was the Meſſiah come to ſave them; proves it from the teſtimony of John, ver. 33. "Ye ſent unto John, and he bare witneſs unto the truth:" Tells them, the deſign of his coming among them was their ſalvation, ver. 34. ſhews them the great ſeal of heaven, his uncontroulable miracles, ver. 36. "The works that I do, bear "witneſs of me, that the Father hath ſent me:" And if that were not enough, he reminds them of the immediate teſtimony given of him from heaven, ver. 37. "The Father himſelf which "hath ſent me, hath born witneſs of me." He did ſo at his *baptiſm*, Math. iii. 17. "And lo a voice from heaven, ſaying, "this is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed." And ſo again, at his transfiguration upon the holy mount, Matth. xvii. 5. "While he yet ſpake, behold a bright cloud overſhadowed "them; and behold a voice out of the cloud, which ſaid, this "is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleaſed, hear ye him." He bids them ſearch the ſcriptures, and critically examine his perfect correſpondence to them, John v. 39. Enough, one would think, to open the door of every man's underſtanding and heart, to receive him with fulleſt ſatisfaction; and yet, after all, behold the unreaſonable obſtinacy and reſiſtance of their hearts againſt him, ver. 40. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye might "have life."

Not a ſoul will open, with all the reaſons and demonſtrations in the world, till the Almighty power of God be put forth to that end. If another come in his own name (ſaith he, ver. 43.) *him will ye receive;* any body rather than the Son of God: Every cheat can impoſe upon you eaſily, 'tis to me only your hearts have ſuch ſtrong averſions. Now there is a twofold ſhutting up of the heart againſt Jeſus Chriſt.

1. Natural. 2. Judicial.

1. *Natural.* Every ſoul comes into this world ſhut up and faſt cloſed againſt the Lord Jeſus. The very will of man, which is the freeſt and moſt arbitrary faculty, comes into the world barred and bolted againſt Chriſt, Rom. viii. 7 "The carnal mind "is enmity againſt God; for it is not ſubject unto the law of "God, neither indeed can be." Phil. ii. 13. "'Tis God that "worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good plea- "ſure." This is a diſmal effect of the fall. Who feels not ſtrong averſations, violent rebellions, and obſtinate reſiſtances in his own heart, when moving towards Chriſt in the firſt weak and trembling acts of faith?

2. There is a *judicial* ſhutting up of the heart againſt Chriſt. This is a ſore and tremendous ſtroke of God, puniſhing former rebellions: Pſal. lxxxi. 11, 12. "Iſrael would have none of me, "ſo I gave them up to their own hearts luſts." This looks like a prelude of damnation, a very near preparation to ruin. *Iſrael would have none of me;* there is the *natural* ſhutting up of the heart; *ſo I gave them up:* there is the *judicial* ſhutting up of the heart; they would not hear, they ſhall not hear. O fearful judgment! Thus the Lord gave up the heathens, Rom. i. 26. they had abuſed their natural light, and now their minds are *judicially* darkened; given up to a ſottiſh and injudicious mind, not able to diſtinguiſh duty from ſin, ſafety from danger; a mind that ſhould elect the worſt things, and reprobate the beſt. This was the reprobate mind unto which God gave them up; what ſadder word can the Lord ſpeak than this, unleſs it be, *Take him devil!* 'Tis true, thoſe that God ſhuts up he can open, and thoſe whom juſtice ſhuts up, mercy can ſet free; but it is beyond all the power of angels and men to do it: Job xii. 14. "He ſhutteth up a man, and there can be no open-"ing." Theſe two cloſures of the heart are not always found together in the ſame ſubject; and bleſſed be God they are not. Chriſt meets with many a repulſe, and endures with much patience the gainſaying of ſinners, before he pronounces that dreadful ſentence upon them, Iſa. vi. 9, 10. "Go and tell this people, "Hear ye indeed, but underſtand not; and ſee ye indeed, but "perceive not: make the heart of this people fat," *&c.*

But when it comes to this once, dreadful is the caſe of ſuch ſouls; and none are in greater danger of this ſpiritual judicial ſtroke of God, than thoſe that have ſat long under the light, rebelling againſt it. That is the firſt thing, the hearts of men by nature are lockt and ſhut up againſt Chriſt.

Secondly, In the next place, let us examine what thoſe locks and bars are which oppoſe and forbid Chriſt's entrance into the hearts of poor ſinners. And they will be found to be,

1. Ignorance.
2. Unbelief.
3. Pride.
4. Cuſtom in ſin.
5. Preſumption.
6. Prejudices againſt the ways of holineſs.

Bars enough to ſecure the ſoul in Satan's poſſeſſion, and fruſtrate all the deſigns of mercy, except an Almighty power from heaven break them aſunder.

1. The firſt bar making faſt the ſoul of man againſt Chriſt, is *ignorance*, that *obex infernalis*, that helliſh bolt, which effectually keeps Chriſt out of the ſoul.

If knowledge be the *key* that opens the heart to Chriſt, as it

is plain it is from Luke xi. 52. where Christ denounceth a woe to them that took away *the key of knowledge*; then *ignorance* must needs be the shutter that makes fast the door of the heart against Christ. Upon this ground Christ told the woman of Samaria, that her infidelity grew upon the root of her ignorance; John iv. 10, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is "that saith to thee, give me to drink, thou wouldst have asked "of him, and he would have given thee living water." Ah sinners, did you but know what a Christ he is that is offered to your souls in the gospel; did you see his beauty, fulness, suitableness, and feel your own necessities of him, all the world could not keep you from him: you would break through all reproaches, all sufferings, all self-denials, to come into the enjoyment of him. But alas, it is with you as it was with those, Cant. v. 9. "What is thy beloved (say they to the spouse) more "than another beloved, that thou dost so charge us?" Unknown excellencies attract not: ignorance is Satan's sceptre, which he sways over all his kingdom of darkness, and holds the vassals in miserable bondage to him: hence the devils are called, Eph. vi. 12. "The rulers of the darkness of this world." Alas, were the eyes of sinners but opened to see their woeful state, and their remedy in Christ, he could never hold them in subjection one day longer; they would break away from under his cruel government, and run over by thousands to Christ: for so they do as soon as ever God opens their eyes; in the same hour they are turned from darkness to light, they are also turned from the power of Satan to God, Acts xxviii. 16. O that you did but know the worth of your souls, the dreadful danger they are in, and the fearful wrath that hangs over them, the willingness and ability of Christ to save them, you could not sleep one night longer in the state you are: the next cry would be, *What shall I do to be saved?* Who will shew me the way to Christ? Help ministers, help Christians, yea, help Lord; these would be the laments and cries of them that are now secure and quiet. But the God of this world hath blinded the eyes of them that believe not: no cries for a physician, because no sense how their souls are *stabbed* by sins of *commission*, and *starved* by sins of *omission*. O that the great physician would once apply his excellent eye-salve to your understandings, which are yet darkened with gross ignorance both of your misery and remedy.

2. The second bar, or lock, that shuts Christ out of men's souls, is the sin of *unbelief*; this is one of the strongest holds of Satan wherein he trusteth; this is a sin that not only locks

up the heart of a ſinner, but alſo binds up the hand of a Saviour; Matth. xiii. 58. "He could do no mighty works there, "becauſe of their unbelief."

It obſtructed his miraculous works when he was on earth, and it obſtructs his gracious work now he is in heaven. A Saviour is come into the world, but poor unbeliever, thy ſoul can neither have union nor communion with him till this bar of thy unbelief be removed. The goſpel is come among us with mighty arguments to convince, and powerful motives to perſuade, but little ſaving effect follows; its main deſign is to many fruſtrated, and all this through unbelief, ſhutting up and hardening mens hearts under it. The word preached did not profit them becauſe of their unbelief. Ah curſed bar! which ſhuts up thy heart, ſhuts out thy Saviour, and will effectually ſhut thee out of heaven, except the Almighty power of God break it aſunder. "They could not enter in becauſe "of unbelief," Heb. iv. 2. The ruin of ſouls is laid at the door of unbelief; it is the damning ſin, Mark xvi. 16. and truly called ſo, becauſe no other ſin could damn but in virtue of this ſin. That is the ſecond bar to Chriſt.

3. The third bar denying entrance to Chriſt into the hearts of ſinners, is *pride*, and ſtoutneſs of ſpirit. The natural heart is a proud heart; it lives upon its own ſtock, it cannot ſtoop to a ſincere and univerſal renunciation of its own righteouſneſs: "Being ignorant of the righteouſneſs of God, and going about "to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs τῇ δικαιοσύνῃ, they have "not ſubmitted to the righteouſneſs of God," Rom. x. 3. Pride ſtiffens the will that it cannot ſtoop or condeſcend to declare their own emptineſs, diſcover their own ſhame, and live wholly upon the righteouſneſs of another. Proud nature had as live be damned as deny itſelf in ſuch a point as this is: This makes faith ſo exceeding difficult, becauſe it involves ſuch deep points of ſelf-denial in it: To give up all to Chriſt, to draw all from Chriſt, and to be willing to part with all for Chriſt. What will can be brought to a deliberate conſent to ſuch things as theſe, unleſs an omnipotent power bow it? It is natural to men rather to eat a brown cruſt, or wear a coarſe ragged garment which they can call their own, than to feed upon the richeſt dainties, or wear the coſtlieſt garments which they muſt receive as an alms or gift from another. O how hard is it to ſubdue this pride of the heart, even after light and convictions are come into the ſoul; to convince men of their undone condition, and the abſolute neceſſity of another and higher righteouſneſs than their own? When ſouls are in a treaty with

Chriſt, and the match is almoſt made; this is the ſin that makes the laſt oppoſition. Fain would they come to Chriſt, ten thouſand worlds for a Chriſt; but yet they think they muſt not approach him without ſome qualifications which are yet wanting. But ſoul, if ever Chriſt and thou conclude the match, thou muſt deny ſelf even in this, the moſt refined form and intereſt of it, and come as Abraham did, naked and empty-handed to him that juſtifieth the ungodly. Down with this houſe-idol, thy ſelf, thy righteous ſelf, trimmed up, like another Agag, with ſuch precious pretences of humility.

4. The fourth bar, forbidding Chriſt's entrance into the ſoul, is *cuſtom in ſin*. Sin hath ſo fixed itſelf by long continuance in the ſoul, the ſoul is ſo ſettled and confirmed in its courſe, that all arguments and perſuaſions to change our way are ſwept away by the power of cuſtom, as ſtraws and feathers are by the rapid courſe of a mighty torrent: Jer. xiii. 23. "Can the Ethiopian change his ſkin, or the leopard his ſpots? "then may ye alſo do good that are accuſtomed to do evil." Soap and nitre may as ſoon make a Blackamoor white, or fetch the ſpots out of the Leopard's ſkin (which are not accidental, but connate) as the reaſonings of men can prevail to remove the mighty power of cuſtomary ſin. Phyſicians find it a hard thing to cure a *cachexia* or ill habit of body. It is a grave and ſerious note of Seneca, *a teneris aſſuefcere, multum eſt.* It is a great matter to be accuſtomed this way or that from our childhood; every repeated act of ſin confirms and ſtrengthens the habit; and hence it is that we ſee ſo few converſions in old age. It was a wonder, in the primitive times, that *Marcus Caius Victorius* embraced Chriſtianity in the ſixtieth year of his age. Take an habituated drunkard, a ſelf-righteous *moraliſt*, lay before them the neceſſity of a change, and you ſhall find it as eaſy to ſtop the courſe of a river with the breath of your mouth, as to ſtop them in a cuſtomed courſe of ſinning. That is the fourth bar to Chriſt.

5. The fifth bar, oppoſing and reſiſting Chriſt's entrance into the ſoul, is the ſin of *preſumption*; this is the ſin that parts Chriſt and thouſands of ſouls in the world; preſuming, they hope; and hoping, they periſh. When men preſume their condition is ſafe already, their ſouls never make out after a Saviour. This was the ruin of Laodicea, Rev. iii. 17. "Be-"cauſe thou ſayeſt, I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and "have need of nothing, and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, "and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked." This damp-

ing presumption is discovered in three things, (1.) Many think they have that grace which they have not, mistaking the *similar* for the *saving* works of the spirit; a fatal mistake never rectified with many thousands till it be too late. (2.) They presume to find that mercy in God, which they will never find; for all the saving mercies of God are dispensed to men, through Christ, in the way of regeneration and faith, Jude ver. 21. (3.) They presume upon that time for repentance and faith hereafter, which their eyes shall never see. And thus presumption doth lock up the heart against Christ, and leaves sinners perishing even in the presence of a Saviour. They make a bridge of their own shadow, and so perish in the waters.

6. The sixth and last sin, barring up the heart against Christ, is a strong prejudice against holiness, and the strict duties of religion. Thus, in the very infancy of Christianity, the world was scared and driven off from religion by the common prejudices that lay upon the professors of it: *As concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against*, Acts xxvii. 22.

Thus Justin Martyr complains, that Christians were every where condemned διὰ τὴν φήμην, by common fame; and upon this account Christ pronounces a woe upon the world because of offences, Matth. xviii. 7. Alas! it will be the ruin of thousands; some have sucked in such prejudicate opinions and vile notions of religion, and its professors, as makes them irreconcilable enemies to it. Satan hath dressed it up in their fancies in such an odious form and representation, that makes them loath both name and thing. These prejudices are drawn from various things; sometimes from the necessary duties of Christianity, which are laid as crimes upon the people of God: "When "I wept, and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my "reproach," Psal. lxix. 10. Sometimes the groundless and malicious slanders and inventions of the enemies of Christianity, are the occasions of real prejudices to the world; "Come, let "us devise devices against Jeremiah, and let us smite him with "the tongue," Jer. xviii. 18. Sometimes the innocent and serious professors of godliness are censured and condemned for hypocritical professors sakes, who never heartily espoused religion. And lastly, The ways of holiness suffer for the slips and infirmities of weak Christians, who commonly give too many occasions to disgust the world against the ways of God.

By these things multitudes are kept off from attendance upon the means of grace, and multitudes more have their hearts shut up from receiving any saving benefit under them.

These are the common bars and locks by which the strong

man armed ſecures his poſſeſſion in the ſouls of ſinners; and theſe bars are too ſtrong for any power beneath the almighty power and arm of God to remove or break. It is ſaid, that the Lord opened a door of faith to the Gentiles, Acts xiv. 27. The arm of the Lord muſt be revealed, or none will open to Chriſt by faith, Iſa. liii. 1.

1. The iron bar of the law, that thundering terrible law, cannot force open the heart of an unbeliever; all the dreadful curſes flying out of its fiery mouth, make no more impreſſion than a tennis-ball againſt a wall of marble. You read of them that hear the words of this curſe, yet bleſs themſelves in their heart, ſaying, they ſhall have peace though they walk in the imagination of their hearts, to add drunkenneſs to thirſt, Deut. xxix. 19.

They play with hell and eternal torments, ruſh into iniquity as the horſe ruſheth into the battle, act as men in love with their own death, as thoſe that are at an agreement with hell. O the beſotting, hardening, infatuating power of ſin!

2. The golden key of free grace cannot, in itſelf, remove theſe bars, and open mens hearts to Chriſt; "We have piped "unto you, but you have not danced," Matth. xi. 17. The melodious and delicious airs of grace, mercy, peace and pardon, affect not the dead hearts of unbelievers: like deaf adders they ſtop their ears at the voice of the charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely. Theſe goſpel-melodies only diſpoſe them to a more quiet ſleep in ſin.

3. No works of providence are, in themſelves, ſufficient to open the hearts of men to Chriſt. (1.) The judgments of God cannot do it; thouſands have been ſick with ſmiting, that yet cannot be made ſick for ſin. "I have conſumed them, but "they refuſed to receive correction; they have made their "faces harder than a rock, they have refuſed to return," Jer. v. 3. Meſſengers of judgment are abroad, ſmiting ſome in their eſtates, ſcattering in one day the labour of many years; and therein giving a warning-blow at the conſcience to make ſure of Chriſt, and the world to come, ſince their comfort and happineſs is ſcattered in this world. Some are ſmitten in their deareſt relations; death knocks at their doors, and carries out the delight of their eyes, and with the ſame admoniſheth their ſouls to place their happineſs in more durable comforts: ſome are ſmitten in their bodies with diſeaſes, giving warning of the near approach of their latter end, and bidding them prepare for another habitation; but all in vain. (2.) No mercies of God are

in themſelves ſufficient to open the obſtinate hearts of ſinners to Chriſt. God hath heaped up mercies by multitudes upon many of you; all theſe mercies of God lead you to repentance, Rom. ii. 4, 5. They take you in a friendly way by the hand, and thus walk with you: ah ſinner! how canſt thou grieve and diſhonour that God that thus feedeth, clotheth, and comforteth thee on every ſide? Do you thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe? Yet all will not do, neither judgments nor mercies can fright or allure the carnal heart to Jeſus Chriſt. It is his Spirit, his Almighty power alone, that opens theſe everlaſting gates, and makes theſe ſtrong bars give way and fly at his voice.

Infer. 1. *Behold here the diſmal ſtate of nature, the woful condition of all unregenerate ſouls; Chriſt the Redeemer ſhut out, ſin and Satan ſhut in.* This is the horrid ſtate of nature ſhut up in unbelief, Rom. iv. 32. Ah Lord, what a condition is this! we ſhould certainly account it an unſpeakable miſery to be ſhut into a houſe haunted by the devil, where we ſhould be continually ſcared and frighted with dreadful noiſes and apparitions; but alas, what is an apparition of the devil without us, to the inhabitation of the devil within us? Nay, what is the poſſeſſion of a body, to Satan's poſſeſſion of the ſoul? Yet this is the very caſe of the unregenerate, Luke xi. 21. The ſtrong man armed keepeth the palace, till Chriſt diſpoſſeſſes him by ſovereign victorious grace. Poor wretch, canſt thou ſtart at a ſuppoſed viſion of a ſpirit, and not tremble to think that thy ſoul is the habitation of devils? There is a twofold miſery lying upon all chriſtleſs, unregenerated perſons; Satan is,

1. Their *ruler* in this world.
2. Their *tormentor* in that to come.

1. He is their *ruler* in this world, the ſpirit that now worketh in the children of diſobedience, Epheſ. ii. 3. Look as the holy Spirit of God dwells and rules in ſanctified ſouls, walks in them as in hallowed temples, guiding and comforting the ſouls of the ſaints; ſo Satan dwells in unregenerate hearts, actuating their luſts, inflaming them with his temptations, uſing their faculties and members as inſtruments of unrighteouſneſs. And then,

2. He will be their *tormentor* in the world to come: He that *tempts* now, will *torment* then, Matth. xxv. 41. "Depart from "me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil "and his angels." Flee therefore, and eſcape for your lives, ſleep not quietly another night in ſo diſmal and dreadful an eſtate. "If the Son make you free, then are ye free indeed."

Infer. 2. *What a glorious and admirable effect of ſovereign, omnipotent grace is the effectual converſion of a ſinner unto God!*

If every heart by nature be ſecured for Satan under ſo many locks and bars, then the opening of any heart to Chriſt is deſervedly marvellous in our eyes. You all acknowledge that the opening of the graves at the reſurrection will be a glorious diſplay of Almighty power, and ſo it will: it will be a wonderful thing to behold the graves opened, and the dead raiſed at the voice of the *Arch-Angel*, and the trump of God; but yet give me leave to ſay, that the opening of thy heart, poor ſinner, to receive Chriſt, is a more glorious work than that of raiſing the dead; it is therefore deſervedly put into the firſt rank of the great myſteries of godlineſs, that Chriſt is believed on in the world, 1 Tim. ii. 16. He that well views and conſiders Chriſt, may juſtly wonder that all the hearts in the enlightened world do not ſtand wide open to embrace him; and he that ſhall conſider the frame and temper of the natural heart, and how ſtrongly Satan hath intrenched and fortified himſelf in it, may juſtly wonder to hear of a work of converſion in an age. O brethren, conſider the marvels of converſion, the wonderful works of God upon the ſoul that opens unto Chriſt by faith.

1. There is a new eye created in the mind: "The Son of "God is come, and hath given us an underſtanding, that we "may know him that is true," 1 John v. 20. O that eye, that precious eye of faith, which ſhews the ſoul, as it were, a new world, a world of new and raviſhing objects, Eph. v. 8. All the angels in heaven, miniſters, and *Libraries* upon earth, cannot create ſuch an eye, give ſuch an illumination; 'tis only he that "commanded the light to ſhine out of darkneſs, that thus "ſhineth into our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge "of the glory of God in the face of Jeſus Chriſt," 2 Cor. iv. 6.

2. And what a glorious ſupernatural work is the conviction of the conſcience by the powerful ſtroke of the ſaving beams of light upon it? Now the conſcience, that lay in a dead ſleep, begins to ſtartle and look about it with fear and horror. Life and ſenſe is got into it, and now it cries, Ah, ſick, ſick, ſick at the heart for ſin, ſick for a Saviour.

3. And no leſs marvellous an effect of the Almighty power is the bowing of the ſtubborn will ſo efficaciouſly, ſo congruouſly, and ſo determinately and fixedly to the Lord Jeſus.

The will is efficaciouſly determined, ſo as no power of hell, or nature, can reſiſt or fruſtrate that mighty power which worketh effectually in all them that believe, 1 Theſ. ii. 13. Yet it works not by way of compulſion, but in a way congruous and agreeable to the nature of the will, Hoſea xi. 4. "I drew "them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." Sa-

tan bids for the ſoul, Chriſt infinitely outbids all his offers; eternal, ſpiritual, and unſearchable riches, inſtead of ſenſitive periſhing enjoyments, which determine the choice of the will in its own natural method, by the ſight of the excelling glory of ſpiritual things. And thus the mighty, ſupernatural power of God opens that heart which Satan had ſecured ſo many ways againſt Chriſt.

Infer. 3. *Hence it alſo follows, that man hath no free will of his own to ſupernatural good.* The will cannot, by its own power, open itſelf to receive Chriſt by faith. When it doth open to him, it is not *virtute innata, ſed illata*, not by its natural power, but by the power of God upon it. The admirers of nature talk much of the ſovereignty, virginity, and liberty of the will, as if it alone had eſcaped the fall, and that no more but a moral ſuaſion is needed to open it to Chriſt; that is, that God doth need no more to ſave men than the devil doth to damn them. But if ever God make you ſenſible what the work of ſaving converſion is, you will quickly find that your will is lame, its freedom to ſpiritual things gone; you will cry out of a wounded will, as well as of a dark head, and a hard heart. You will quickly find, "That it is God alone that worketh in "you both to will and to do of his own good pleaſure," Phil. ii. 13. That the birth of the new creature is not of the will of man, but of God, John i. 13.

Infer. 4. *Learn hence the neceſſity of converſion in order to ſalvation.* Chriſt and heaven are ſhut up againſt you, till your hearts be ſavingly opened unto him. "Verily, verily, I ſay "unto you, you muſt be born again," John iii. 5. O ſinner, that hard heart of thine muſt be humbled; thy ſtubborn and refractory will muſt be bowed; all the powers of thy ſoul muſt be unlocked and opened unto Chriſt; he muſt come into thy ſoul, or thou canſt never ſee the face of God in peace. "It is "Chriſt in you that is the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. Till thy heart be opened, Chriſt, with all the hopes of glory, ſtand without thee. And if hopes from the death of Chriſt without us, without the application of his perſon, be enough to ſave men, then why are any damned? Conſult 1 Cor. i. 30. Adam's ſin damns none but only ſuch as are in him; and Chriſt's righteouſneſs ſaves none but thoſe only that are by faith in him; the eternal purpoſe of the Father, the meritorious death of the Son, puts no man into the ſtate of ſalvation and happineſs, till both be brought home by the Spirit's powerful application in the work of ſaving converſion. It is good news, good indeed, that Chriſt died for ſinners; it is good news that Chriſt is

brought to our very doors in the tenders of the gospel, and that the spirit knocks at the door of our hearts, by many convictions and persuasions, to open to him, and enjoy the unspeakable benefits of his death: these things bring us nigh to Christ, the next door to salvation; and yet all this may be, eventually but a dreadful aggravation of our damnation, and will certainly be so to them whose hearts are but almost opened to Christ.

Infer. 5. *See hence the necessity of fervent prayer to accompany the preaching of the gospel.* Without the Spirit and power of God accompanying the word, no heart can ever be opened to Christ: alas, such bars as these are too strong for the breath of man to break! let ministers pray, and the people pray that the gospel may be preached "with the holy Ghost sent down from "heaven," 1 Pet. i. 12. It greatly concerns us that preach the gospel to wrestle with God upon our knees, to accompany us in the dispensation of it unto the people; to steep that seed we sow among you in tears and prayers before you hear it; and I beseech you, brethren, let us not strive alone, join your cries to heaven with ours, for the blessing of the Spirit upon the word. How doth Paul beg of the people, as a beggar would beg for an alms at the door, for their assistance in prayer, Rom. xv. 30. "I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's "sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together "with me in your prayers to God for me."

For want of such wrestlings with God in prayer, there is so little efficacy in ordinances. Martha told her Saviour, John xi. 21. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died;" and I may tell you, that if the Spirit had been here, your souls had not remained dead under the word as they do this day. O when the sabbath draws near, let fervent cries ascend from every family to heaven. Lord pour out thy Spirit with thy word; make it mighty, through thy power to open these gates of iron, and break asunder these bars of brass.

Second Use of Exhortation.

Seeing the case stands thus, that all hearts by nature are barred and shut up against Christ; let every soul do what it can, and strive to its uttermost, to get the heart and will opened to Christ: *Strive to enter in at the strait gate.* Christ is at the door, O strive with yourselves, as well as with God, now to get it opened, now that salvation is come so near your souls.

Object. But have you not told us, that no sinner can open his own heart, nor bow his own will to Christ?

Ans. True, he cannot convert himself, but yet he may do

many things in order to it, and which have a remote tendency to it, which he doth not do; and ſo he periſheth not, though he cannot, but becauſe he will not.

Divers things may be done by poor ſinners with their own hearts, which are not done; and though in themſelves they are inſufficient, yet being the way and method in and by which the Spirit of God uſually works, we are bound to do them. As for example, (1.) Though it be not in your power to open your hearts to Chriſt, yet it is in your power to forbear the external acts of ſin, which faſten your hearts the more againſt Chriſt; who forces thine hands to ſteal, thy tongue to ſwear or lie? Who forces the cup of exceſs down your throat? (2.) Though you cannot open your hearts under the word, yet it is in your power to wait and attend upon the external duties and ordinances of the goſpel: why cannot thoſe feet carry thee to the aſſemblies of the ſaints, as well as to an ale-houſe? (3.) And though you cannot let the word effectually into your hearts, yet certainly you can apply your minds with more attention and conſideration to it than you do. Who forces thine eyes to wander, or cloſes them with ſleep, when the awful matters of eternal life and death are ſounding in thine ears? (4.) Though you cannot open your hearts to embrace Chriſt, yet certainly you can reflect upon yourſelves when the obvious characters of a Chriſtleſs ſtate are plainly held forth before your eyes: God hath given you a ſelf-reflecting power; "The ſpirit of man knoweth "the things of a man," 1 Cor. ii. 11. When you hear of convictions of ſin, compunction of heart for ſin, deep concernments of the ſoul about its eternal ſtate, hungerings and thirſtings after Chriſt, reſtleſs and anxious days and nights about ſalvation, others have felt; you can certainly turn in upon yourſelves, and examine whether ever it were ſo with you: and if not, methinks it were not hard to aggravate your own miſery, to take your poor ſouls aſide, and bemoan them, ſaying, ah my my poor ſoul, canſt thou endure everlaſting burnings? What will become of thee if Chriſt paſs thee by, and his ſpirit ſtrive no more with thee? Why cannot you throw yourſelves at the feet of God, and cry for mercy? Prayer is a part of natural worſhip, diſtreſs uſually puts men upon it that yet have no grace, Jonah i. 5. Do but this towards the opening and ſaving of your own ſouls, which though it be not in itſelf ſufficient, nor puts God under any meritorious obligation or neceſſity to add the reſt; yet it puts you into the way of the ſpirit. And is not thy ſoul, ſinner, worth as much as this comes to? Have you not taken a great deal more pains than this for the trifles of

this world? And will it not be a dreadful aggravation of sin and misery to all eternity, that you perished so easily. Do not you see many striving round about you for Christ and salvation, whilst you sit still with folded arms as if you had nothing to do for another world? "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force," Mat. xi. 12.

Why should other mens souls be dearer to them than yours unto you? What discouragements have you, which other men have not? Or what encouragements have they, which you have not?

Object. Say not, We have no assurance our pains shall prosper, or our strivings be made effectual to conversion; if there were any promise in the gospel that such endeavours should be seconded from heaven, and made available to salvation, then we would strive as long as breath and life should last; but all this may be to no purpose, we may be Christless, and hopeless when all is done.

Sol. But yet remember it is possible God may bless these weak endeavours, and come in by his Almighty spirit with them: nay, it is highly probable that he will do so; and is a strong probability nothing with you? Do you use to do no actions about your civil callings without an assurance of success? When the merchant adventures his life or estate at sea, is he sure of a good return? Or doth he not adventure upon the mere hopes and probabilities of a gainful voyage? When the husbandman plows his land, empties both his bags and purse upon it, is he sure of a good harvest? May not a blast come that shall defeat all his hopes? Yet he ploweth and soweth in hope, and ordinarily God maketh him partake of his hope; but without such industry his expectations would be vain. Away then with vain excuses, up and be doing in the use of all appointed means, and the Lord be with you.

Third Use for Trial.

Before I dismiss this point, let us try ourselves by it, whether God hath opened our hearts to Christ, broken these bars of ignorance, unbelief, custom, prejudice, &c. and the will stand wide open to receive Christ Jesus the Lord.

This is a solemn use, the consequence of it great; O that our faithfulness and seriousness in the trial might be answerable. Try yourselves by these following marks:

Mark 1. If your eyes be not opened to see sin in its vileness, and Christ in his glory, suitableness, and necessity; then sure your hearts were never yet effectually opened by the gospel. I

confeſs mens eyes may be opened to ſee ſin, and yet their hearts at the ſame time ſhut up by unbelief againſt Chriſt; but no man's heart can be opened to Chriſt whilſt his eyes are ſhut: John iv. 40. "This is the will of him that ſent me, that every "one which ſeeth the Son and believeth on him, may have "everlaſting life." The work of faith is always wrought in the light of conviction; the cure of the heart begins at the eye of the mind, Acts xxvi. 18. "to open their eyes, and turn "them from darkneſs to light, and from the power of Satan to "God." God opens mens hearts by ſhining into them, 2 Cor. iv. 6. If therefore any man's eyes be ſtill blinded with ignorance, prejudice, *&c.* ſo that he apprehends not his own guilt and miſery, nor ſees the worth and neceſſity of a Saviour; that man's heart is ſtill under Satan's lock and bar, ſin is ſhut in, and Chriſt is ſhut out of that man's ſoul.

Mark 2. No heart opens to Chriſt by faith, till it be firſt pricked and wounded by compunction and humiliation; this heart-wounding work is always antecedent to the work of faith. I doubt not but your thoughts fore-run my diſcourſe to that famous ſcripture, Acts ii. 37. where Peter preaching to thoſe that had crucified Chriſt, and bringing up his diſcourſe cloſe to their conſciences, in the application of that ſermon, convincing them not only what a horrid and attrocious crime the crucifying the Son of God was in itſelf; but alſo charging it home upon them, "Whom ye have taken, and with wicked hands have "crucified and ſlain; when they heard this, they were prick-"ed at the heart; and cried out, men and brethren, what ſhall "we do?" Upon this out-cry three thouſand ſouls opened in one hour to Chriſt. Now conſider whether your hearts have been thus pricked and wounded; hath ſorrow for ſin pierced thy ſoul? Vain ſinner, that frothy heart of thine muſt be made to bleed under compunctions for ſin, or there will be no room for Chriſt in it. Come ſouls, it is in vain to flatter yourſelves in your own eyes: reflect upon the frames of your hearts, call back the days that are paſt, and ſay, when was the *time*, and where was the *place* when thou layeſt at the foot of God, ſobbing and mourning upon the account of thy ſins? Did ever God hear ſuch a cry as this from thy ſoul! *Ah Lord, my ſoul is diſtreſſed, I roll hither and thither for eaſe and comfort, but find none; O the inſupportable weight of guilt! O the bitterneſs of ſin! My ſoul fails under it, Lord undertake for me.* I do not ſay, the degrees of compunction and humiliation are equal in all converts; neither their ſins, nor abilities to bear ſorrows for them, are equal; but this I ſay, thy heart muſt ake for ſin, or it will

never open to Christ; he binds up none but broken hearts, Isa. xvi. 1.

Mark 3. If Christ be come into thy heart, then the love and delight of every sin is gone out of thy heart. Christ and the love of sin cannot dwell together: what Christ said to the soldiers that apprehended him in the garden, the like he saith to every soul that comes to apprehend him by faith, *If you seek me, let these go their way;* away with the sin thou most delightest in: Christ cannot come in till these be gone, Isa. lv. 6, 7, 8. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him "while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the "unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the "Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, "for he will abundantly pardon." Here be the terms of your acceptation and salvation plainly laid down, forsake thy ways and thoughts; the *way*, notes the external acts of sin; and the *thoughts*, the internal acts, both of contrivance and delight in sin; both these must be forsaken; and that is not all, for this makes up but a negative holiness. *Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy.* It is in vain for men to make the door of salvation wider than God hath made it; we cannot bring down Christ's terms lower than he hath set them; if we will not come up to them, Christ and we must part. And this makes the great struggle, the sharp debate in the souls of converts. O! it is hard to give up pleasant and profitable lusts; but away you must go, a bill of divorce must be signed for them, or you cannot be espoused to the Lord Jesus. This will be found to be much harder, than to part with all externals for Christ's sake.

Mark 4. No heart can open truly to Christ, that is not made willing, upon due deliberation, to receive him, with his cross of sufferings, and his yoke of obedience, Mat. xvi. 24. and xi. 29.

An exception against either of these is an effectual bar to thy union with Christ; he looks upon that soul as not worthy of him, that puts in such an exception, Mat. x. 38. If thou judgest not Christ worth all sufferings, all losses, all reproaches, he judges thee unworthy to bear the name of his disciple. So for the duties of obedience, called his yoke; he that will not receive Christ's yoke, can never receive his person, nor any benefit by his blood.

Mark 5. Every heart that opens sincerely and evangelically to Christ, opens to him in deep humility, and sense of its emp-

tineſs and unworthineſs; all ſelf-righteouſneſs is given up as dung and droſs: Thus Abraham came unto him, as to one that juſtifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5. "Now to him that worketh "not, but believeth on him that juſtifieth the ungodly, his "faith is counted for righteouſneſs." Yea, here is the true way of juſtification indeed; where the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt comes, all ſelf-righteouſneſs vaniſhes before it. By him that worketh not, underſtand not an idle, lazy believer, that takes no care of the duties of obedience; no, no, an idle faith can never be a ſaving faith: But the meaning is, he worketh not in a law ſenſe, to the ends and intentions of the firſt covenant; to make up a righteouſneſs to himſelf by his own working, to cover himſelf with a robe of righteouſneſs of his own ſpinning and weaving, a home-made cloth; no, not a rag of that: Thou muſt receive Chriſt into an empty, naked, unworthy ſoul, or not receive him at all. Bleſſed Paul heartily rejected all his own righteouſneſs, caſt down that *houſe-idol* to the ground, that he might be found in the imputed righteouſneſs of Chriſt, Phil. iii. 18. Caſt that idol out of door, it ſtands in the way of a better righteouſneſs. There be divers ways wherein ſinners maintain their own righteouſneſs to their own ruin: There is a groſs, and a more refined ſelf-righteouſneſs; the one more palpable, and eaſily liable to conviction, the other much harder to be diſcovered and cured. Aſk ſome men upon what their hopes of ſalvation are grounded? and they will tell you, they are juſt in their dealings with men, and conſtant in their prayers to God, that is all, and therefore they doubt not of their ſalvation: Thus they ſubſtitute a righteouſneſs of their own, in the room of Chriſt's blood, and are their own *deſtroyers* by ſeeking this way to be their own *Saviours*. But then there is a more refined way of ſelf-righteouſneſs, dreſt up with ſuch pretences of humility, that men are hardly to be convinced of it. I pity many poor ſouls upon this account, who ſtand off from Chriſt, dare not believe becauſe they want ſuch and ſuch qualifications to fit them for Chriſt. O ſaith one, could I find ſo much brokenneſs of heart for ſin, ſo much reformation and power over corruptions, then I could come to Chriſt; the meaning of which is this, if I could bring a price in my hand to purchaſe him, then I ſhould be encouraged to go unto him. Here, now, lies horrible pride covered over with a veil of great humility: Poor ſinner, either come naked and empty-handed, according to Iſa. lv. 1. Rom. iv. 5. or expect a repulſe; for Chriſt is not the *ſale*, but the *gift* of God.

Mark 6. Laſtly, whatever ſoul opens ſavingly to Chriſt, it

opens finally and everlaſtingly to him; the heart once opened to Chriſt, muſt ſtand open for ever to him, never to ſhut out Chriſt any more. And here is a very obſervable difference betwixt a man that comes to Chriſt, in a ſudden fright of conſcience, and parts with him again when that fright is over; and a man that receiveth Chriſt not to ſojourn, but to dwell in his heart by faith, Epheſ. iii. 17. When Chriſt comes into the heart, he ſaith, here will I dwell for ever; and Lord, ſaith the ſoul, ſo I receive thee; this is the day of union, O let me never know a day of ſeparation; let it never be in the power of life or death, angels, principalities, or powers, things preſent or to come, to make a ſeparation betwixt thee and me. Soul, ſaith Chriſt, thou ſhalt be mine whilſt I am in heaven; and Lord, ſaith the ſoul, I will be thine whilſt I am on earth. I will never leave thee nor forſake thee, ſaith Chriſt: O my Lord, ſaith the ſoul, hold me faſt in thy hand, that I may never leave nor forſake thee; my eſtate, liberty, and life, may, and muſt go; but it is in the fixed purpoſe of my heart never, never to let thee go. The eſpouſals betwixt Chriſt and the ſoul are for ever, Hoſ. ii. 19. "I will betroth thee unto me for "ever, yea, for ever." And here lies another great difference betwixt the hypocrite that takes Chriſt with a politic reſerve, that will venture with Chriſt at ſea no farther than he can ſee the ſhore; and the upright heart that embarks itſelf with Chriſt without reſerves, come what will; that ſaith to him, as Ittai to David, when perſuaded to go back in a time of danger; nay, ſaith he, where my Lord Jeſus Chriſt is, whether it be in liberty or in priſon, in life or in death, there alſo will I be. Fleſh may perſuade to a retreat; nay, ſaith the ſoul, I cannot retreat; but wherever the truths of Chriſt, the intereſt and glory of Chriſt are, there alſo muſt I be; for upon theſe terms I firſt received him, and opened the door of my heart to him. Theſe things are no ſurprizes to me, Chriſt and I have debated them long ago; he dealt fairly with me, and I muſt deal faithfully with him.

Now, brethren, view over theſe ſix trials: Have your eyes been opened to ſee ſin in its vileneſs, Chriſt in his beauty and neceſſity? Have your hearts been pricked and wounded with compunction and ſorrow for ſin? Are the loves and delights of ſin gone out of your ſouls? Have you no exceptions either to the croſs or yoke of Chriſt? Have you given up all your own righteouſneſs, whether groſs or refined, for dung and droſs, and received Chriſt for ever? Then thy heart is ſavingly opened to him.

Fourth Uſe.

The laſt uſe that cloſeth this point, will be conſolation to all thoſe whoſe hearts the Lord hath thus opened to receive Chriſt at his knocks and calls of the goſpel.

Hath God indeed opened any of your hearts, and made you ſincerely willing to receive Chriſt? then there are ten ſweet conſolations, like ſo many boxes of precious ointment to be poured forth, in the cloſe of this diſcourſe, upon every ſuch ſoul. And the

Firſt *Conſolation* ſhall be this: The opening of any man's heart to receive Chriſt, is a clear ſolid Scripture-evidence of the Lord's eternal love to, and ſetting apart that man for himſelf from all eternity. I do not ſay, that every man, whoſe heart is opened by faith, is thereupon immediately aſſured and ſatisfied that God hath choſen him to ſalvation: But whether he apprehended it or no, the thing in itſelf is certain and real: Conſult 1 Theſſ. i. 4, 5. "Knowing, brethren beloved, your "election of God; for our goſpel came not to you in word "only, but alſo in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt," *&c.* Their election of God was the thing to be proved; but alas, might they ſay, who can know that but God alone? It is among the divine ſecrets; yes, ſaith the apoſtle, we know it, and by this we know it; for our goſpel came not unto you in an empty ſound, but in mighty efficacy, effectually opening your hearts to believe. A more clear and certain evidence of your election cannot be given in this world. Look again into Rom. viii. 30. "Moreover, whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called; "and whom he called, them he alſo juſtified; and whom he "juſtified, them he alſo glorified."

There are two great and raviſhing truths cleared in this Scripture; the one is this, that the whole number of the called, upon earth, is taken out of ſuch as were predeſtinated to life before the world was. The other is this, that as the whole number of the glorified ſaints in heaven, is made up of ſouls called and juſtified upon earth; ſo the called ſoul, that is, the ſoul that ſavingly opens to Chriſt by faith, may from that work of the Spirit upon him, ſolidly reaſon backward to God's electing love before all time; and forward to his glorification with God, when time ſhall be no more.

O how ſtrong is the conſolation flowing out of this glorious work of the Spirit upon our hearts! that is one thing.

II. *Conſolation.* The opening of the heart to receive Chriſt, is the peculiar effect of the divine and almighty power of God; the arm of an angel is too weak to break thoſe ſtrong bars be-

fore-mentioned. Therefore the exceeding greatneſs of his power, is applied unto this work of believing, Eph. i. 19. "And what "is the exceeding greatneſs of his power to us-ward who be-"lieve, according to the working of his mighty power which "he wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the dead." Here is power, the power of God, the greatneſs of his power, the exceeding greatneſs of his power, the very ſame power which wrought in Chriſt when he raiſed him from the dead; and all this no more than needs to make the heart of man open by faith to receive Chriſt; the only key that fits the croſs wards of man's will, and effectually opens his heart, is in the hand of Chriſt, Rev. iii. 7. "He hath the key of David, he openeth and "no man ſhutteth."

How long have ſome of you ſat under able miniſters, ſearching ſermons, and rouzing providences? yet all to no purpoſe, till this almighty power came with the word, and then the work was done. "Thy people ſhall be willing in the day of thy "power;" Pſal. cx. 3. What a glorious power was that which opened Chriſt's grave, when he lay in the heart of the earth, with a mighty ſtone rolled upon his ſepulchre? And how mighty a power is that which breaks aſunder all thoſe bars which kept thy ſoul in the ſtate of ſin and death? None feel this power, but only thoſe whom God intendeth for ſalvation; and having once wrought this, it is engaged to go through with all the reſt, which yet remaineth to be done, to perfect thy ſalvation.

III. *Conſolation.* The opening of thy heart to Chriſt, is not only an effect of almighty power, but ſuch an effect of it, without which all that Chriſt hath done and ſuffered had been of no avail to thy ſalvation; neither the eternal decrees of God, nor the meritorious ſufferings of Chriſt, are effectual to any man's ſalvation, until this work of the Spirit be wrought upon his heart. The offering up of Chriſt is, in its kind and place, ſufficient to purchaſe our redemption; but it is the receiving of Chriſt by faith that brings home ſalvation to our ſouls; where there be many con-cauſes to produce one effect, that effect is not produced until the laſt cauſe have wrought. Thus it is here, the moving cauſe, *viz.* the free grace of God, hath wrought; and the meritorious cauſe, the death of Chriſt, hath alſo wrought; but ſtill the heart, even of an elect man, remaineth under guilt and condemnation, until the Spirit, who is the applying cauſe, have alſo wrought this bleſſed effect we now ſpeak of. It is Chriſt in us, *i. e.* in union with our ſouls, which is, to us, the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. 1 Cor. i. 30. Behold then the laſt

ſtroke given in this opening of the heart by faith; herein electing love hath brought home Chriſt, with all the purchaſes and benefits of his death, into the actual poſſeſſion of thy ſoul. O how tranſporting and raviſhing a conſideration is this!

IV. *Conſolation.* In this work, the opening of the heart by faith, the great deſign and main intention of the goſpel is alſo anſwered and accompliſhed. You behold in the church a glorious frame of ordinances ſet up by divine inſtitution, miniſters appointed to preach ſermons, ſacraments, prayers, ſinging, variety of ordinances ſet up, excellent gifts given to men, as the fruit of Chriſt's aſcenſion into heaven. Now what was the deſign of God in the inſtitution of all theſe things, but that by them, as inſtruments in his hand, our ignorant, dead, unbelieving hearts might be opened to Chriſt, in acts of repentance and faith, and built up to a perfect man? Miniſters are ſent "to "open your eyes, turn you from darkneſs to light, and from the "power of Satan to God," Acts xxvi. 18. They are not ſent by Chriſt into this world to get a living, to drive ſo poor a trade as that for themſelves, but to bring you to faith, 1 Cor. iii. 5. When God's elect are thus brought in and built up in Chriſt, you ſhall ſee this glorious frame of ordinances taken down; there will be no more preaching nor hearing, the end of all theſe things being accompliſhed; 1 Cor. xv. 24. "Then cometh the "end, when he ſhall have delivered up the kingdom to God, "even the Father," *&c.* Now the conſideration of the accompliſhment of the great and principal deſign of the goſpel thus far upon thy heart, is matter of tranſporting joy. Miniſters may, and muſt die, ordinances may be removed, but this bleſſed effect of them upon thy ſoul ſhall never die: God will perfect what he hath begun. That is the fourth conſolation.

V. *Conſolation.* And then, *5thly*, That day wherein thy heart is ſavingly opened to receive Chriſt, that very day is ſalvation come to thy ſoul. When Zaccheus's heart was opened to Chriſt, he tells him, Luke xix. 9. "This day is ſalvation come "to thy houſe." Salvation was come into the world before thou waſt born; yea, ſalvation was come to thy doors in the tenders of the goſpel before, but it never came into thy ſoul till the day wherein thy heart opened to Chriſt by faith. And is not this matter of ſingular conſolation? If ſalvation be not, what is; no wonder that the *eunuch* went home rejoicing when he had received Chriſt by faith, Acts viii. 39. that the *jaylor* rejoiced with all his houſe, Acts xvi. 34. Neither blame, nor wonder at men for rejoicing, for it is the day of their ſalvation. It is true, their ſalvation is not finiſhed that day, there may be

many things yet to be done, and ſuffered by them before the completeing of it; but it is begun that day, the foundation is laid in the ſoul that day, and the top-ſtone ſhall be ſet up with ſhouting in due time, crying, grace, grace, unto it.

VI. *Conſolation.* The opening of a ſinner's heart to Chriſt makes joy in heaven, a triumph in the city of our God above; Luke xv. 7. "I ſay unto you, likewiſe, that joy ſhall be in "heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety-"nine juſt perſons which need no repentance." As when a young prince is born, all the kingdom rejoices, the conduits run with wine, and there is all demonſtration of joy and thankfulneſs in every city and town: It is much more ſo in heaven, when a ſoul is born to Chriſt under the goſpel. It is a ſatisfaction to the heart of the Lord Jeſus, who now beholds more of the travail of his ſoul, and to all the angels and ſaints, that another ſoul is eſpouſed to him.

Beloved, when the goſpel is effectually brought home by the Spirit to the heart of a ſinner, and wounds him for ſin, ſends him home, crying, O ſick, ſick of ſin, and ſick for Chriſt; the news thereof is preſently in heaven, and ſets the whole city of God a rejoicing. Chriſt never rejoiced over thee before, thou haſt wounded him and grieved him a thouſand times, but he never rejoiced in thee till now; and that which gives joy to Chriſt may well be matter of joy to thee. And that is the ſixth conſolation.

VII. *Conſolation.* And then, *7thly*, That day thy heart is unlocked, unbarred, and ſavingly opened by faith, that very day an intimate, ſpiritual, and everlaſting union is made betwixt Chriſt and thy ſoul; from that day Chriſt is thine, and thou art his. Chriſt is a great and glorious perſon, but how great and glorious ſoever he be, the ſmall and feeble arms of thy faith may ſurround and embrace him; and thou mayeſt ſay, with the church, "My beloved is mine, and I am his:" For mark what he ſaith in the text, "If any man open to me, I will come "unto him." That ſoul ſhall be my habitation, there will I dwell for ever. Thus will Chriſt dwell in your hearts by faith. What ſoul feels not itſelf advanced by this union with the Son of God? Hereby the believer becomes a member of his body, fleſh and bones; this is an honour beſtowed upon thy ſoul, above, and beyond all that honour that ever God beſtowed upon any angel in heaven; to them Chriſt is an head by way of dominion, but to thee by way of vital influence. Angels are as the *barons* and *nobles* of his kingdom, but the believer

his ſpouſe, and all the angels of heaven miniſtring ſpirits unto ſuch. That is the ſeventh conſolation.

VIII. *Conſolation.* And then, *8thly*, The opening of thy heart to Chriſt brings thee not only into union with his perſon, but into a ſtate of ſweet, ſoul-enriching communion with him. So he ſpeaketh in the text, "If any man open the door, I will "ſup with him, and he with me." Poor ſoul, thou haſt lived many years in the world, and never hadſt any communion with God till this day. Chriſt and thy ſoul have been ſtrangers till now. It is true, thou haſt had communion with ordinances and communion with ſaints, but for communion with Chriſt thou couldeſt know nothing of it, till thou receivedſt him into thy ſoul by faith. Now thou mayſt ſay, "Truly my fellow-"ſhip is with the Father, and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt," 1 John i. 3.

And thenceforth thy communion with men is pleaſant and deſirable.

IX. *Conſolation.* The opening of a man's ſoul to Chriſt by faith is a ſpecial and peculiar mercy, which falls to the ſhare but of a very few. God hath done that for thee which he hath denied to millions; "Who hath believed our report? and to "whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?" *i. e.* to how ſmall a remnant in the world, Iſa. liii. 1. And the apoſtle puts the work of faith among the great myſteries of godlineſs, among the wonders of religion, 1 Tim. iii. 16. "Preached unto the "Gentiles, believed on in the world."

The ſound of the goſpel is gone forth into the world; "Many "are called, but few are choſen. There were many widows "in Iſrael, in the days of Elias, but to none of them was Elias "ſent, ſave unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that "was a widow," Luke iv. 25, 26. To allude to this, there were many hundreds that ſat under the ſame ſermon which opened thy heart to Chriſt, but it may be unto none of them was the Spirit of God ſent that day, to open their hearts by faith, but unto thee; thou wilt freely acknowledge thyſelf as unlikely and unworthy as the vileſt ſinner there. O aſtoniſhing mercy!

X. *Conſolation.* And then laſtly, In the ſame day thy heart opens by faith to Chriſt, all the treaſures of Chriſt are unlocked and opened to thee. In the ſame hour God turns the key of regeneration to open thy ſoul; the key of free grace is alſo turned to open unto thee the unſearchable riches of Chriſt; then the righteouſneſs of Chriſt becomes thine to juſtify thee, the wiſdom of Chriſt to guide thee, the holineſs of Chriſt to

sanctify thee; in a word, he is that day made of God to thee "Wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," 1 Cor. i. 30. "All is yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's," 1 Cor. iii. *ult.* And thus I have shewed you some of those great things God doth for those souls that will but do this one thing for him, *viz.* open their hearts to receive Christ upon the tenders and terms of the gospel.

* *

SERMON IV.

Rev. iii. 20. *Behold I* [*stand*] *at the door and knock,* &c.

THE verb ἕστηκα here rendered *I stand*, is of the *preter tense*, and would strictly be rendered *I have stood*; but being joined with a verb of the *present tense*, is here rendered *I do stand*, a frequent Hebraism in scripture: And it notes the continued patience and long-suffering of Christ; I have stood and still do stand, exercising wonderful patience towards obstinate sinners. Which gives us this fourth observation.

Doct. 4. *That great and admirable is the patience of Christ, in waiting upon trifling and obstinate sinners.*

Thus wisdom, *i. e.* Christ expresses himself, Prov. i. 24. "I "have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, "and no man regarded." Here you have not only Christ's earnest calls, but suitable gestures also, to gain attention. The stretching out of the hand was a signal given to procure attention, Acts xxi. 40. Yet none regards; and this the Lord doth not once or twice, but all the day long, Isa. lxv. 2. shewing forth all long-suffering, as the apostle speaks, 1 Tim. i. 16. In the opening of this point I will shew you,

1. What divine patience is.
2. Wherein it is evidenced.
3. Why it is exercised towards sinners.

First, Of the nature of divine patience; it is an ability in God not only to delay the execution of his wrath for a time towards some, but to delay it in order to the eternal salvation of others. Let me speak to the parts of this description of divine patience.

1. It is an ability of power in God, not the effect of impotence, or want of opportunity: All sinners are continually within the reach of the arm of his justice, and he can strike

when, and where he will. Esau had a revengeful mind against Jacob, but wanted opportunity, and therefore was forced to delay the execution of his conceived wrath, until the days for mourning for his father were come; and then saith he, "I will "slay my brother Jacob," Gen. xxvii. 41. But in God it is a glorious effect of power, Nah. i. 3. "The Lord is slow to an-"ger, and great in power."

The greatness of his patience flows from the greatness of his power: So the apostle speaks, Rom. ix. 22. "What, if "God willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, "endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted, "*or made up* to destruction?" And therefore when Moses prays for the exercise of divine patience towards the provoking Israelites, he doth it in this form, Numb. xiv. 17, 18. "And "now I beseech thee, let the power of my Lord be great, ac-"cording as thou hast spoken, saying, the Lord is long-suffer-"ing," *&c.* He could exercise this Almighty power upon thee, and crush thee by it as a moth is crushed; but behold he exercises it upon himself, in stopping the propensions of his own justice, which daily sollicit him to cut thee off; it is the power of God over his wrath, bridling and restraining it from day to day.

2. This patience is exercised toward such as perish, in a temporary delay of their damnation; and though this be but a mere suspension of his wrath for a *time*, yet it is a glorious act of patience in him; as that forecited text, Rom. ix. 22. shews. Is it nothing for a sinner condemned as soon as born, to be reprieved so many years out of hell? Thou hast been provoking him daily, and hourly, to cut thee off, and send thee to thy own place; and yet to be on this side the everlasting burnings, this is wholly owing to the riches of his forbearance. Ah, how is God to be admired in this his glorious power over his own wrath! when we look abroad into the world, and see every where sinners ripe for destruction, daring the God of heaven to his face, yet forborn, how admirable is this power of God!

3. God doth not only exercise this power in a temporary suspension of his wrath against some, who, alas, must feel it at last; but he delays the execution of his wrath in a design of mercy towards others, that they may never feel it, Isa. xlviii. 8, 9. Thus he bears with his own elect, all the years of their lives wherein they lay in the state of nature, and went on in a course of rebellion against God; and this long-suffering of God towards them proves their salvation, as you

have it in 2 Pet. iii. 15. "And account that the long-suffering "of our Lord is salvation." What is the meaning of that? Ah, Christian, thou mayest easily know the meaning of it, without turning over many *Commentaries;* thou art now in Christ, safely escaped out of the danger of wrath to come; but thou owest this thy salvation to the patience and long-suffering of God towards thee. For what if he had cut thee off in the days of thy ignorance and rebellion against him (and thou knowest thou didst give him millions of provocations so to do) where hadst thou now been? Thou hadst never seen Christ, nor the least dawning hope of salvation by him. Remember how oft you lay in those days upon beds of sickness upon the brink of the grave; what was it that saved thee from eternal wrath, but this admirable patience of Christ? Well, therefore, may the apostle say, "Account the long-suffering of God to be salvation."

This patience of God seems to be a branch springing out of his mercy and goodness; only it differs from mercy in this, that man as *miserable* is the object of mercy, but man as *criminal* is the object of patience. Thus briefly of the nature of divine patience, a power of God over his own wrath, not only to suspend it for a time towards them that perish, but to delay the execution of it in a design of salvation towards others.

Secondly, Next we come to shew the various evidences of this divine patience, or wherein it appears in its glorious manifestations towards provoking sinners; and there are seven full evidences and discoveries of it, which should make the hearts of sinners melt within them, whilst they are sounding in their ears. Ah, methinks, such things as these should melt down your hard hearts before the Lord!

1. And the first evidence of the riches of his patience shall be taken from the multitude of sins that men and women are guilty of before him, the least of which is a burden too heavy for any creature to bear; the Psalmist saith, Psal. xl. 12. "Innumerable evils have compassed me about." It was true, as applied to the person of David; and though it be there applied to the person of Christ, yet not one of them were his own sins, but ours; called his, by God's reckoning or imputing them to him. Men can number vast sums, millions of millions, but no man can number his own sins, they pass all account. There is not a member of the body, though never so small, but hath been the instrument of innumerable evils. For instance, the *tongue*, the apostle tells us, is *a world of iniquity*, Jam. iii. 6. And if there be a *world* of sin in one member, what then are the sins of all? How many idle, frothy, vain words, hath thy

tongue uttered? And yet for them, Chriſt ſaith, "Men ſhall "give an account in the day of judgment," Mat. xii. 36. And what have the ſins of thy thoughts been? "The thoughts of "fooliſhneſs is ſin," (ſaith Solomon,) Prov. xxiv. 9. O, who can underſtand his errors? Yet the patience of God hath not failed under ſuch innumerable evils. O glorious patience! well may it be uſhered in the text with a term of admiration, *Behold, I ſtand!*

2. The ſecond evidence of the divine patience ſhall be taken from the heinous nature of ſome ſins above others, whereby ſinners fly, as it were, in the very face of God; and yet he bears with long-ſuffering, lets not looſe his hands to cut them off. All ſins are not of one ſize; ſome have a ſlighter tincture, and ſome are deeper; called upon that account ſcarlet and crimſon ſins, Iſa. i. 18. double dyed abominations, ſins in grain; ſuch are ſins againſt knowledge, ſins committed after convictions, and covenants, and rebukes of providence. I do not only ſpeak of outward groſs acts of ſin; for as the ſchool-men well determine, though outward ſins are ſins of greater infamy, yet inward ſins may be ſins of greater guilt: even thoſe ſins that never took air to defame thee in the world: but whatever they be (reader) whether outward, or inward, thy conſcience is privy to them, and thy ſoul may ſtand amazed at the patience of God, in forbearing thee all this while, under ſuch provocations, and horrid rebellions againſt him; eſpecially, conſidering how many there be this day in hell that never provoked God by ſinning with ſuch an high hand as thou haſt done.

3. It is yet a greater evidence of the patience of God, in bearing with, and forbearing us under the guilt of that ſpecial ſin, *viz.* The ſlighting and neglecting of Jeſus Chriſt: here is a ſin that goes to the very heart of Jeſus Chriſt; he can bear any other ſin rather than that; and yet this hath Chriſt born from every ſoul of you. You are the men and women that have ſpurned at the yearning bowels of his mercies, ſlighted his grace, trampled his precious blood under foot, and yet he hath forborn you unto this day; read Mat. xxii. 5. and let thy conſcience anſwer, whether thou art not equally deep in the guilt of making light of Chriſt with thoſe wretches upon whom it is there charged. Chriſt hath ſuffered the wrath of God in thy room, brought home ſalvation, in goſpel-offers, to thy door; and then to be ſlighted! no patience but his own could bear it. Every ſermon and prayer you have ſat under with a dead heart; every motion of his Spirit which you have quenched, what is this but the making light of Chriſt, and the great ſalvation!

here the deepeſt project of infinite wiſdom, and the richeſt gift of free-grace, wherein God commends his love to men, are vilely undervalued as ſmall things: and thus have you done days without number; and yet his hand is not ſtretched out, to cut thee off in thy rebellion: *Who is a God like unto thee!* What patience like the patience of Chriſt!

4. The length of time the patience of Chriſt hath endured thee, ſpeaks the perfection and riches of patience towards thee. Conſider ſinner, what age thou art of, how many years thou canſt number, and that all this hath been a time of patience, for thou waſt a tranſgreſſor from the womb, Iſa. xlviii. 8, 9. yet for his name ſake hath he deferred his anger, and hath not cut thee off. How ſoon did the wrath of God break forth upon the angels when they ſinned in heaven! And how long hath it borne with thee, whilſt thou haſt been provoking him on earth? Was there ever patience like the patience of God! Many thouſands have been ſent away to hell ſince thy day, but thou art yet ſpared; O that the long-ſuffering of God might be ſalvation to thee!

5. It is a great evidence of the power of divine patience that may be drawn from the grievouſneſs of our ſins to God, during the whole time of his forbearance: it is true, there is no proper paſſion in the divine nature, no real perturbation, his anger is a mild and holy flame; yet the contrariety of ſin to the holineſs of his nature is what makes his patience miraculous in the eyes of men. The ſcripture ſpeaking in a condeſcending language to the underſtanding of the creature, repreſents God as wounded to the heart by the ſins of men; ſo in Ezek. vi. 9. "I am "broken with their whoriſh heart, which hath departed from "me;" and Amos ii. 13. "Behold I am preſſed under you, as "a cart is preſſed that is full of ſheaves," when the axle-tree is ready to crack under the load: and 2 Chron. xxxvi. 16. it is ſaid, "The wrath of the Lord aroſe againſt his people till "there was no remedy;" his patience would bear no longer, and therefore when he executes his wrath upon provoking ſinners, that execution is repreſented in the nature of an eaſe or relief to his burdened patience and juſtice, Iſa. i. 24. "Ah, ſaith "he, I will eaſe me of my enemies, and avenge me of my ad-"verſaries." Yet, obſerve, it comes in with an *(ah)* with a kind of regret and reluctancy; ſo in Iſa. x. 25. "Yet a very "little while and the indignation ſhall ceaſe, and my anger is "in their deſtruction." God could have given eaſe and reſt this way to his anger long ago, but he chuſes rather ſtill to bear with thee, than on theſe terms to eaſe himſelf of thee.

Evidence 6. The vaſt expences of his riches and bounty upon us, during the whole time of his forbearance and patience towards us, ſpeak him unconceivable and infinite in his long-ſuffering towards us, Rom. ii. 4, 5. "Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of "his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not know-"ing that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance?" *q. d.* Vile ſinner, canſt thou compute the treaſures of bounty and goodneſs, thou haſt been riotouſly ſpending and waſting all this while? Doſt thou know what vaſt ſums Chriſt hath ſpent upon thee to preſerve thee ſo long out of hell? There be two treaſures ſpending upon ſinners all the time of God's forbearance of them; there is the precious treaſure of thy time waſted, and the invaluable ſtreams of goſpel-grace running all this while at the waſte ſpout: thy time is precious; the whole of thy time, which is betwixt thee and eternity, is but little, and the moſt thereof has been waſted in ſin, and caſt away upon vanity: but that is not all, the treaſures of goſpel-grace have been waſting all this while upon thee. In Zech. iv. 12. it is compared to golden oil, maintaining the lamps of ordinances; ſo it is ſet forth to us in that ſtately emblem. Who would maintain a lamp with golden oil for wanton children to play by? Yet this hath God done while thy ſoul hath dallied and trifled with him. The witneſſes and miniſters of Chriſt, in Rev. xi. 3, 4. are compared to thoſe olive-trees that drop their precious oil, their gifts, graces, yea, and their natural ſpirits with them, into this lamp, to keep it burning; all this while the blood of Chriſt hath been running in vain, the miniſters of Chriſt preaching and beſeeching in vain, the Spirit of Chriſt ſtriving with you in vain. You burn away golden oil, and yet your lamp is not gone out. O marvellous patience! O the riches of God's forbearance!

7. Laſtly, The riches of divine patience towards you, are greatly heightened and aggravated by the quick diſpatch the Lord hath made of other ſinners, whilſt he hath ſpared and paſt over you. This comparative conſideration calls upon you in the apoſtle's language, Rom. xi. 22. "Behold the goodneſs and "ſeverity of God; on them which fell, ſeverity; but towards "thee, goodneſs, if thou continue in his goodneſs, otherwiſe "thou ſhalt be cut off." Some ſinners have been cut off in the beginning of their days, many in the very acts of ſin, and thoſe not greater than thy ſins; they are gone to their own place, and thou ſtill left for a monument of the patience and forbearance of God. The ſin of Achan was not a greater ſin than thy covetouſneſs, and the earthlineſs of thy heart is; the

ſin of Nadab and Abihu, in offering up ſtrange fire, than thy ſuperſtition, and offering up uncommanded ſervices to God: yet the hand of God fell upon them, and ſmote them dead in the place; in the day and place wherein they ſinned, they periſhed; they were taken away in their iniquities, but thou reſerved. O that it might be for an inſtance and example of the riches of divine patience, which may at laſt lead thee to repentance!

Thus I have given you ſeven evidences of the wonderful patience of Chriſt, who hath ſtood, and ſtill doth ſtand at the door and knock. Next we will enquire into the grounds and reaſons of this marvellous patience of Chriſt, this aſtoniſhing long-ſuffering of God towards ſinners; and there are divers obvious reaſons of the long-ſuffering of God towards men.

Reaſon 1. The exerciſe of his patience is a ſtanding teſtimony of his reconcileable and merciful nature towards ſinful man. This he ſhewed forth in his patience toward Paul, a great example of his merciful nature, for a pattern to them that ſhould hereafter believe on him, 1 Tim. i. 16. The long-ſuffering of God is a ſpecial part of his manifeſtative glory; and therefore when Moſes deſired a ſight of his glory, Exod. xxxiv. 6. he proclaims his name, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and "gracious, long-ſuffering, and abundant in goodneſs and truth." He would have poor ſinners look towards him as an atonable Deity, a God willing to be reconciled, a God that retaineth not his anger for ever; but if poor ſinners will take hold of his ſtrength, and make peace with him, they may have peace, Iſa. xxvii. 4. This long-ſuffering is an attribute very expreſſive of the divine nature; he is willing ſinners ſhould know, whatever their provocations have been, there is room for pardon and peace, if they will yet come in to accept the terms. This patience is a *diadem* belonging to the *imperial crown* of heaven; the Lord glories in it, as what is peculiar to himſelf, Hoſ. xi. 9. "I will not execute the fierceneſs of my anger; for I am "God and not man:" *q. d.* Had I been as man, the holieſt, meekeſt, and mortifiedſt man upon earth, I had conſumed them long ago; but I am God, and not man, my patience is above all created patience; no huſband can bear with his wife, no parent with his child, as God hath borne with you. That is one reaſon of Chriſt's waiting upon trifling ſinners, to give proof of his gracious, merciful, and reconcileable nature towards the worſt of ſinners.

Reaſon 2. The Lord exerciſes this admirable patience towards

ſinners, with deſign thereby to lead them to repentance; that is the direct aim and intention of it. The Lord deſires, and delights to ſee, ingenuous relentings and brokenneſs of heart for ſin; and there is nothing like his forbearance, and patience, for promoting ſuch an evangelical repentance. All the terrors of the law will not break the heart of a ſinner, as the patience and long-ſuffering of God will do; therefore it is ſaid, Rom. ii. 4. "That the goodneſs, forbearance and long-ſuffering of God "lead men to repentance:" theſe are fitted to work upon all thoſe principles of humanity, which incline men to repentance; reaſon, conſcience, gratitude, feel the influences of the goodneſs of God herein, and melt under it; Saul's heart relented in this caſe, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17. "Is this thy voice, my ſon David? "and Saul lift up his voice, and wept: and he ſaid to David, "Thou art more righteous than I, for thou haſt rewarded me "good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." Thus the goodneſs and forbearance of God doth, as it were, take a ſinner by the hand, leads him into a corner, and ſaith, come, let thou and I talk together; thus and thus vile haſt thou been, and thus and thus long-ſuffering and merciful have I been to thee; thy heart hath been full of ſin, the heart of thy God hath been full of pity and mercy: This puts the ſinner into tears, breaks his heart in pieces; if any thing in the world will melt a hard heart, this will do it. O how good hath God been to me! How have I tried his patience to the uttermoſt, and ſtill he waiteth to be gracious, and is exalted that he may have compaſſion; the ſobs and tears, the ingenuous thaws and relentings of a ſinner's heart, under the apprehenſions of the ſparing mercy and goodneſs of God, is the muſic of heaven.

Reaſon 3. The Lord exerciſes this long-ſuffering towards ſinners, to clear his juſtice in the damnation of all the obſtinate refuſers of Chriſt and mercy. Chriſt waits at our doors now, that he may be clear in his ſentence againſt us hereafter. This patience of Chriſt takes away all apologies and pleas out of the mouths of impenitent ſinners; the more Chriſt's patience hath been, the leſs defence or plea they will have for themſelves.

Think with thyſelf, ſinner, what wilt thou anſwer in the great day, when Chriſt ſhall ſay, Did not I ſtand at thy door from day to day, from Sabbath to Sabbath, from year to year, calling, wooing, perſuading thee to be reconciled, and accept pardon and mercy in the proper ſeaſon of them, and thou wouldſt not? Rev. ii. 21. "I gave her ſpace to repent, and ſhe "repented not." Well, the Lord gives you time now, a ſpace of repentance, ſuch a ſpace as millions of ſouls, gone out of

time into a miserable eternity, never had. With whomsoever Christ hath been quick and severe, to be sure he hath not been so with you. This time of Christ's patience will be evidence enough to clear Christ and condemn you; men and angels shall applaud the sentence as dreadful as it is, and say, righteous art thou, O Lord, in judging thus.

Reason 4. The Lord draws forth and exercises his admirable patience towards sinners for the continuation and propagation of the church. The church must be continued and propagated from age to age; and if God should be quick in cutting off sinners as soon as ever they provoke him, Whence should the elect of God rise in this world! There are thousands of God's elect in the loins of God's enemies. Many that will heartily embrace Christ, must rise from such as reject him.

Now if God should cut off these in the beginning of their provocations, How should the church be continued? Where had good Abijah and Hezekiah been, if wicked Jeroboam and Ahaz had been cut off in their first transgressions? The Lord suffers many a wicked parent to stand for a time under his patience; because children are to spring from them who will obey and embrace that Christ whom their wicked parents rejected: yea, the wicked do not only propagate the church, but are useful to preserve and defend it: as the useless chaff is a defence to the wheat. Rev. xii. 16. "The earth shall help the woman."

Reason 5. To conclude, The Lord exerciseth this long-suffering towards sinners, in a gracious condescension to the prayers of his people. "Were it not that the Lord had left a small "remnant, we had been as Sodom, we had been like unto "Gomorrah," Isa. i. 9.

The prayers and intercessions of the saints are a screen betwixt wicked men and the wrath of God for a time, Job xxii. 30. The innocent preserve the island. The world stands by the prayers of the saints; what multitudes of rebellious, Christ-despising sinners swarm this day in every part of this nation? Such as declare, by their open practice, they will not have Christ to reign over them, who contemn his offers, despise his messengers; but blessed be God, yea, and let them bless him too, that there are others mourning to the Lord for them, beseeching his forbearance towards them. Little do the wicked know how much they are beholden to the prayers of the saints. These and such like reasons prevail with the Lord Jesus to stand in a waiting, patient posture, at the doors of sinners. Ah, how

loath is he to give them up! We now proceed to the uses of this point by way of,

1. Information. 2. Exhortation. 3. Consolation.

Use 1. And *First*, This point will be very fruitful for information of our understandings in divers great and useful points, both doctrinal and practical, wherein every soul among you is deeply concerned; and, therefore, I beseech you, let them be heard and pondered with an answerable attention and seriousness of spirit: And the first inference shall be this.

Infer. 1. If the Lord Jesus do exercise such admirable patience towards sinners, *Then how much better is it for poor sinners to be in the hands of Christ, than in the hands of the best and holiest man in the world?* O sinner, it is better for thee to fall into the hands of the meek and merciful Jesus, than into the hands of the dearest friend thou hast upon earth; no creature can bear what Christ bears; no patience like the patience of Christ: It is said of Moses, Numb. xi. 12. "Now the man Moses was "meek above all men upon the face of the earth." There was never such a man born into the world, for patience, meekness, and long-suffering, as Moses was; and yet, for all that, this mirror of meekness could not bear the provocations of Israel: You rebels, saith he, must I draw water for you out of the rock? Thus was his spirit ruffled with the provocations of Israel, and this lost him the land of Canaan. Jonah was a good man, a prophet of the Lord; yet because the Lord would not be so quick and severe with Nineveh, as Jonah would have had him, in what uncomely language doth his angry soul return upon his God? Jonah iv. 2. "O Lord, (saith he) was not this my say-"ing when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before "unto Tarshish, for I knew thou wert a gracious God and "merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest "thee of the evil; therefore now, O Lord, take, I beseech "thee, my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to "live:" *q. d.* Ah, Lord, I knew it would come to this, I knew thy gracious nature, how inclinable thou art to mercy, and that upon the first appearance of their repentance, thou wouldst repent of the evil, and so free-grace would make me as a liar among them.

Nay, give me leave to speak a higher word than all this, and let it not seem strange, that the patience of the glorified saints in heaven is nothing to the patience of Christ towards provoking sinners upon earth. Those glorified souls that be above, though they have patience, among other graces, perfected in its kind, yet still it is but created, finite patience, and it cannot bear

what Christ's patience bears: Take an instance of it out of Rev. vi. 9, 10, 11. "I saw under the altar the souls of those "that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony "which they held; and they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost not thou judge and "avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth: And it "was said unto them, That they should rest for a little season." Here you see glorified souls less able to bear the slow pace of justice towards their enemies, than Christ was. It is true, here was no sinful impatience, but yet a patience short of Christ's infinite patience. Ah, if you were to depend upon the patience of any creature in heaven or earth, you had worn it out long ago. I will not execute the fierceness of my anger, for I am God and not man. Ah, it is well we have to do with God; if a man find his enemy, will he let him go away? 1 Sam. xxiv. 19. No, no, he will reckon before he part with him. Sinner, the Lord finds thee daily in thy sins, and yet lets thee go; yet beware thou try not his patience too far, lest vengeance overtake thee at last, and pay the justice of God with all the arrears due to his patience.

Infer. 2. Hence it follows, *that convinced and broken-hearted sinners need not be discouraged in going to Jesus Christ for mercy, seeing he exercises such wonderful patience towards obstinate and refusing sinners.*

This inference breathes pure gospel; it is a cordial to chear the heart that is moving towards Christ with fear and trembling. It is a great artifice of the devil to daunt, and discourage poor convinced sinners, by telling them there is no hope of mercy for them; that they shall find the arms of mercy closed, the bowels of compassion shut up; that the time of mercy is now past, they come too late. O how busy is satan with such suggestions as these in many of your souls? But I am come to tell you this day, that these are but the artifices of the enemy, you are going to the fountain of mercy, patience, goodness, and long-suffering; go on, and you shall find abundantly more than you expect. He will not cast off a soul that comes mourning and panting towards him, and is willing to subscribe the gospel-articles of reconciliation: No, he will not shut out such a soul, whatever its rebellions and provocations have been. Sinner, thou art going to the meek and merciful Jesus, Matth. xi. 28. "Come unto me all ye that labour and "are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke "upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." You are going to meekness and mercy itself; he is the Lamb of God,

that is his name: Go on then, poor trembling ſinner, don't ſtand any longer at, ſhall I, ſhall I? with Chriſt; but make a bold but neceſſary adventure of faith; try him once, and then report what you find him to be: Certainly if he exerciſe ſuch patience towards the veſſels of wrath, whilſt they are fitting to deſtruction, as he doth, Rom. ix. 22. he will not want patience for a veſſel of mercy, preparing by humiliation and faith for Chriſt and glory. Doth he forbear thoſe that ſtand in defiance, and will he fall upon thoſe that are mourning to him upon the knee of ſubmiſſion? Shall a damned wretch, that is preparing for hell, find ſo much forbearance, and a poor broken-hearted ſinner none? It cannot be. If Jeſus Chriſt forbear thee when thy heart was hard as a rock, and could not yield one tear, one ſigh for ſin, will he execute his wrath upon thee, will he ſhew thee no mercy, when thy heart is broken all to pieces with ſorrow, and filled with loathing and deteſtation againſt ſin, and thyſelf for ſin? Did he forbear thee when ſin was thy delight? And will he deſtroy thee now it is thy burden? It cannot be.

Moreover, if the Lord Jeſus had not a mind to ſhew mercy to thy poor ſoul, now, now, that thine eyes are opened, and thine heart touched to the quick, why hath he forborne the execution of his wrath ſo long? He might have taken his own time to cut you off when he would, he might have made any day the execution-day: But ſure, among all the days of thy life, the day of thy humiliation, the day of thy faith, is not like to prove that day.

Again, as great and vile ſinners as thyſelf have adventured upon the grace of Chriſt, and found it infinitely beyond their expectation. Theſe the Lord Jeſus hath ſet forth as encouraging examples to all the broken-hearted ſinners that are coming after; that they ſeeing how it hath fared with their forerunners to Chriſt, might be encouraged to come on with the more confidence, 1 Tim. i. 16. "But I obtained mercy, that "in me firſt Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a "pattern to them that ſhould hereafter believe on him to life "everlaſting." Well then, ſhut your ears againſt all the whiſpers of ſatan, entertain no evil reports of Chriſt; the devil loves to draw a falſe picture of Chriſt, and repreſent him in the moſt diſcouraging form to poor trembling ſinners; but you will not find him ſo. What can Chriſt ſay more to convince and ſatisfy ſouls than he hath done? He hath left the boſom of the Father, he hath taken union with thy nature, he hath poured out his ſoul unto death; he hath told us, "Thoſe that

come unto him, he will in no wise cast out." Thousands are gone before us in the paths of repentance and faith, and found it according to his word; you have been spared all your life to this day of mercy. O do not stand off now upon such weak objections.

Infer. 3. *The long-suffering of Christ towards sinners, instructeth and teacheth his ministers to imitate their Lord in a Christ-like patience and long-suffering.* Christ is our pattern of patience; if he wait, much more may we: We think it much to stand from sabbath to sabbath, wooing, pleading, and inviting, and are apt to be discouraged when we see no fruit follow. The want of success is apt to cast us under Jeremiah's temptation, "To speak no more in his name;" and to lament with Isaiah, "That we have laboured in vain." It is a hard case to study, pray and preach, and see all our labours return in vain. It is not so much the expending as the returning of our labours upon us in vain, that discourageth our hearts. Ministers would not die so fast, saith Mr. Lockier on Colossians, nor be grayheaded so soon, did they see the fruits of their labours upon their people. But let us look to our pattern in the text, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." If the master wait, let not the servant be weary: "The servant of the "Lord must not strive, but be patient toward all; waiting, "if at any time God will give them repentance," 2 Tim. iv. 24.

Though the beginnings be small, our latter end may greatly increase: Though we now fish with angles, and take but now one, and then another, the time may come, and we hope it is at the door, when we shall spread our nets, and inclose multitudes. Aretius, a pious divine, comforteth himself thus, under the unsuccessfulness of his labours, *Dabit posterior ætas tractabiliores fortasse animos, mitiora pectora quam nostra habent tempora.* 'Future days will afford more tractable spirits, 'and easier tempers of mind, than our present times afford.' Beside, the fruit of our labours may spring up to a blessed harvest when we are gone, John iv. 37. One man soweth, and another reapeth; but if not, our reward will not be measured by the success, but the sincerity of our designs and labours. Our zeal for conversion of souls to Christ will be accepted, but our discouragement in his service will certainly displease him. If Israel be not gathered, yet shall we be glorious in the eyes of the Lord. However, let this be a caution to you that hear us, that you cast not our souls under such discouragements. If I may speak the sense of others from my own experience, then I

can assure you, that the fixedness of your hearts in the ways of sin, and your untractableness to the calls of God, are a greater burden and discouragement to us than all the sufferings we have met withal from the world; yet are we contented to pray in hope, and preach in hope, encouraging ourselves (the Lord grant it be not without ground) that a crop shall yet spring up, which shall make the harvest-men laugh.

Infer. 4. *From the patience and long-suffering of Christ, we may learn the invaluable preciousness of souls, and the high esteem Christ hath for them.*

Though your souls be cheap in your own eyes, and you are contented to sell them for a trifle, for a little sensual pleasure and ease, some of you will hazard them for a shilling; yet certainly Jesus Christ hath an high esteem of them, else he would never stand knocking with such importunity, and waiting with such wonderful patience for the salvation of them. Christ knows their worth, though you do not; he accounts, and so should you, one of your souls more worth than the whole world, Matth. xvi. 26. The soul of the poorest child, or meanest servant, that hears me this day, is of greater value in Christ's eye than the whole world; and he hath given three great evidences of it, (1.) That he thought it worth his heart-blood to redeem and save it: 1 Pet. i. 19. "You were not re-"deemed with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of "the Son of God." Had they not been precious in his eyes, he would never have shed his most precious blood to ransom them. (2.) Were they not highly valuable in his eyes, he would never wait with such unwearied patience to save them as he doth. He hath borne thousands of repulses, and unreasonable denials from you: Sinner, Christ hath knocked at thy door in many a sermon, in many a prayer, in many a sickness, in all which thou hast put him off, denied him, or delayed him; yet still he continues knocking and waiting. Thou couldst not have made the poorest beggar in the world wait at thy door so long as thy Redeemer hath been made to wait, and yet he is not gone; at this day his voice sounds in thine ears, "Behold, "I stand at the door and knock." Here's clear demonstration of the preciousness of thy soul in the Redeemer's eyes. And then, lastly, when Christ ends the treaty, and gives up the souls of men for lost, and unpersuadable, with what regret and sorrow doth he part with them! Never did one friend part from another with such demonstrations of sorrow as Christ parteth with the souls of sinners. The bowels of his compassion roll together; for he knows what is coming upon them, and what

that eternal misery is into which their wilful rejection of him will cast them: In Luke xix. 42. you find the Redeemer's tears wept over obstinate Jerusalem; "And when he came nigh to "the city, he wept over it, and said, O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, "if thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things that "belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thine eyes." Like unto this is that expression, Isa. i. 24. "Ah, I will ease "me of mine enemies," *&c.* Though it be an ease to his justice, yet he cannot give them up without an *Ah*, an interjection of sorrow; so in Hosea xi. 8. "How shall I give thee up, Eph-"raim? How shall I deliver thee, Judah?" I must do it, but how shall I go about it? All these expressions shew the great value God hath for your souls; and did you know it also, certainly you would not make Christ wait one hour longer.

Infer. 5. Hence it follows, *That greater is the sin, and severer will be the condemnation of them that perish under the gospel, than of all other people in the world.* Let me speak freely to you that hear me this day, Jesus Christ hath spent more of the riches of his patience upon you in one year, yea, in this very day, than he hath spent upon the heathen world in all the days of their lives; they never heard of Christ, and the great salvation; they have had no calls to faith and repentance, as you have had; don't think God hath dealt at this rate with other nations. You have his sabbaths, ministers, calls; he hath not dealt so with other nations, and as for these things they have not known them, Psal. cxlvii. 19. God hath dealt in a peculiar way with us, and these special favours will make dreadful accounts. He told the Jews, among whom he had preached and wrought his miracles, "It would be more tolerable for Sodom "and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for them;" and in his name I will tell you this day, that barbarous Indians and Americans will have a milder hell than you; *Mitius ardent*. And as the Lord told Ezekiel, chap. iii. 5, 6. "Thou art not "sent to a people of a strange speech and of a hard language, "whose words thou canst not understand; surely had I sent "thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee: But the "house of Israel would not hearken unto thee, for they will not "hearken unto me: For all the house of Israel are impudent "and hard-hearted."

Ah, brethren, it is a sad truth, that the ministers of Christ have found more fruit of their labours among the Savage Americans, than in England, people born and bred up under the gospel. Had a heathenish people your sabbaths, your ministers

and bibles, they would not deal by Christ as you have done? But look you to it, for certainly the severity of his justice will at last recompence the expence of his patience: There are two glasses turned up this day, and both almost run down; the glass of the gospel running down on earth, and the glass of Christ's patience running down in heaven. Be sure of it, that for every sand of mercy, every drop of love that runs down in vain in this world, a drop of wrath runs into the vial of wrath which is fitting in heaven.

Infer. 6. *If Christ hath exercised such admirable patience and long-suffering towards you, before he could gain entrance into your heart; then you have all the reason in the world to exercise your patience for Christ, and account all long-suffering to be your unquestionable duty.* Christ was not weary in waiting upon you, be not you weary in waiting upon him, or for him. Now there are three things wherein the people of God will have much occasion to exercise their patience with respect to Christ.

(1.) You will need a great deal of patience to wait for the returns and answers of your prayers; you knock and wait at the door of mercy, and no answer comes; hereupon discouragement and weariness seizeth your spirits. Possibly some of you have prayers many years gone upon the file in heaven, some upon spiritual accounts, and some upon temporal; and because the answer is not dispatched, your eyes are ready to fail with waiting: For the Lord may bear long with his own elect, Luke xviii. 7. The seed of prayer lies under the clods, and will at last spring up, "For he never said to the seed of "Jacob, seek me in vain:" None seek God in vain, but those that seek him vainly. Now, you should not be too quick and short-breathed in waiting upon God for the returns of prayer, considering how long you made Christ wait upon you.

(2.) You will have occasion to exercise your patience in bearing the burden of reproaches, and sufferings for Christ; "For to you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to be-"lieve, but also to suffer for his sake," Phil. i. 29. Sufferings, you see, are the gifts of Christ, the comfort of suffering is his gift, and so are the abilities to suffer also; and that which will increase your suffering ability, will be the consideration of Christ's long-suffering towards you, and the hard things he endured for you and from you.

(3.) You will have occasion to exercise your patience for the day of your complete redemption and salvation. If you love Christ fervently, the time of your separation from him will be borne difficultly; vehement love needs the allay of pa-

tience, 2 Theſſ. iii. 5. "The Lord direct your hearts in the "love of God, and into the patient waiting for Chriſt." Others need much patience to die, but ſuch will need as much patience to live; but whatever the exerciſes of your patience ſhall be, whether in waiting for the returns of your prayers, in bearing the croſs and ſufferings of Chriſt, or in waiting for the day of your complete redemption and enjoyment of Chriſt: This ſingle conſideration, that Chriſt ſtood and waited ſo long upon you, is enough to fortify your patience againſt all the difficulties it ſhall encounter.

Infer. 7. Laſtly, *If Chriſt thus patiently wait upon triffling and obſtinate ſinners; then let no godly perſon be diſcouraged, becauſe their unregenerate relations have not yet made their firſt ſtep towards Chriſt, in the way of repentance and ſaving faith.*

It may be you have laid up a great ſtock of prayers for them, the believing huſband hath prayed for his unbelieving wife, and the believing wife for her unbelieving huſband; godly parents for their ungodly children, and the gracious child for his ungodly parents; and yet no returns of prayer appear. Many cries are gone up to heaven like that of Abraham, Gen. xvii. 18. "O that Iſhmael might live before thee." Well, be not diſcouraged, Chriſt is contented to wait, and therefore well may you. Thoſe cries of parents, Lord, my poor child is in the ſtate of nature, look in mercy upon him, open his eyes, break his heart for ſin, draw his will to Chriſt; theſe cries may not be loſt, though the fruit of them yet appear not: Conſider how long Chriſt waited upon you. There be three things that encourage hope: (1.) That your hearts and theirs were of the ſame natural complexion and temper; and the ſame power which opened your hearts can open theirs; thy underſtanding was once as dark, thy heart as hard, and thy will as inflexible as thy carnal relations now are. The ſame hand that opened thy heart, can open theirs. Don't think Chriſt had an eaſier taſk to win thy heart, than he will have to win theirs. Almighty power wrought upon you, and the ſame power can work effectually upon them; the Lord's hand is not ſhortened. (2.) You have reaſon to wait, for as much as it is probable you yourſelves have put ſtumbling-blocks in the way of their ſouls to Chriſt, and hindered the returns of your own prayers for the converſion of your carnal relatives. O Chriſtians, there is more due to them than your prayers, prayers muſt be backed with examples; had they not only heard your cries to God for them, but ſeen your ſuitable encouraging pattern ſet before them alſo,

you and yours might have rejoiced together long ago. But (3.) conſider that God many times makes the fruit of ſuch prayers to ſpring up after thoſe that ſowed them are dead and gone. The Lord may give life to your prayers when you are dead: certainly your prayers die not with you. It is the opinion of ſome, that Paul's converſion was the return of Stephen's prayer, "Lord, lay not this ſin to their charge." Stephen died, but his prayers lived, and were anſwered upon one that ſtood by and conſented to his death. But however it be, wait on; if your prayers come not into their boſoms, they will certainly return into your own. Here is duty diſcharged, love to Chriſt and their ſouls manifeſted; which will be your comfort, however God diſpoſes the event.

II. *Uſe.*

Secondly, The doctrine of Chriſt's patience puts a great and ſerious exhortation into my mouth this day, to preſs one of the greateſt duties upon you that ever I preſſed in the whole courſe of my miniſtry among you: And could I deliver this exhortation to you upon my knees, with tears of blood mingled with my words, might that prevail, I would ſurely do it. My exhortation is to all that are in an unregenerate ſtate, that they preſume not to try the patience of Chriſt any longer. If you have any regard to your eternal happineſs, exercile not his patience beyond this hour. O that this hour might put an end to Chriſt's waiting, and your danger! hitherto you have wearied men, but will you weary God alſo? Chriſt hath called, but you have refuſed; he hath ſtretched out his hands, but you have not regarded. Your thoughts have been wandering after vanity, whilſt the voice of the goſpel hath been ſounding in your ears; ſome of you have been ſottiſh, and incapable to apprehend ſpiritual truths, others of you ſenſual, given up to the pleaſures of the world, and abandoning all ſerious thoughts about the world to come. Some of you have been buried alive in the cares of the world, and others ſettled upon a dead formality in religion: And to this day Chriſt hath called upon you in vain. Now that which I exhort you to, is, that you venture not to try the patience of Chriſt one day longer; if you have any regard to the everlaſting happineſs of your ſouls, come not under the guilt, and danger of one denial, or delay more. If you aſk me why? Why may we not venture a little longer? Chriſt hath borne all this while, and will he not bear a little longer? May we not take a little more pleaſure in ſin? May we not hazard one ſermon, or ſabbath more, and yet not periſh? I anſwer,

no. If your ſouls be precious in your eyes, let there be no more denials, nor delays to Chriſt's ſuit. For,

1. How patient, and long-ſuffering ſoever Chriſt hath been, yet there will be an end of the day of his patience; a time when he will wait no longer, when his ſpirit ſhall ſtrive no more with you. There is a knock of Chriſt at the heart, which will be the laſt knock that ever he will give; and after that no more knocks: a time when the maſter of the houſe will riſe up, and the door be ſhut. You have had to do with a meek, and patient Chriſt hitherto; but believe it, ſinners, there is a day called *the day of the wrath of the Lamb*, and that day is dreadful, Rev. vi. 16. where you find ſinners crying *to the rocks and mountains to fall upon them, and hide them from the wrath of the Lamb.* O if this wrath be once kindled, though but a little; *bleſſed are they that truſt in him*, that have finiſhed their agreement with him. The day of Chriſt's patience towards Jeruſalem, was a long day, but it had an end, Mat. xxiii. 37. and it ended in their deſolation: therefore try the patience of Chriſt no further; you know not the limits of it, it may end with your next refuſal, and then where are you? 2. The longer Chriſt hath exerciſed his patience already towards you, the more terribly will he avenge the abuſe of it in hell upon you. It is paſt doubt with me, that there are different degrees of torment in hell; the ſcriptures are plainly, and clearly for it. Now among all the aggravations of the torments of hell, none can be greater than the reflections of damned ſouls upon the abuſed patience, and grace of Chriſt: thoſe that had the beſt means, the loudeſt calls, and the longeſt day under the goſpel, will certainly have the hotteſt place in hell, if the goodneſs and long-ſuffering of Chriſt, do not now lead them to repentance; the cries of ſuch ſouls will be heard above the cries of all other miſerable wretches that are caſt away. "It will be more tolerable for Sodom "and Gomorrah, than for Capernaum," Mat. xi. 23. O friends, you little know the ſmart reflections of conſcience in hell, upon ſuch hours, as you now enjoy; ſuch wooing, charming voices, and allurements to Chriſt, as you now hear. There are many thouſands of ſouls in hell, that came thither out of the dark, heatheniſh parts of the world, where they never heard of Chriſt; but your miſery will be far beyond theirs, your reflections more ſharp, and bitter: therefore delay no longer, leſt you periſh with peculiar aggravation of miſery. 3. Try the patience of Chriſt no further. I beſeech you, foraſmuch as you ſee every day the patience of Chriſt ending towards others: patience coming down, and juſtice aſcending the ſtage, to triumph

over the abuſers of mercy. You do not only read in Scripture the finiſhing and ending of God's patience with men, but you may ſee it every day with your own eyes. If you look into Scripture, you may find the patience of God ended towards multitudes of ſinners, who poſſibly had the ſame preſumptions, and vain hopes, for the continuance of it, that you now have: if you look into 1 Pet. iii. 19, 20. you ſhall there find, that *Chriſt went and preached to the ſpirits in priſon, which ſometimes were diſobedient, when once the long-ſuffering of God waited in the days of Noah.* The meaning of it is this, that in the days before the flood, Chriſt by his Spirit ſtrove with the diſobedient and rebellious ſinners in the miniſtry of Noah, who then were living men and women, as now we are, but now are ſpirits in priſon, *i. e.* damned ſouls in hell, for their diſobedience: and truly, brethren, you may frequently behold the glaſs of patience run down, the very laſt ſtand in it ſpent upon others. Whenever you ſee a wicked, Chriſtleſs man or woman die, you ſee the end of God's patience with that man or woman; and all this for a warning to you, that you adventure not to trifle, and dally with it as they did. 4. Laſtly, Do not try God's patience any longer (if you love your ſouls) for this reaſon, becauſe when men grow bold, and encourage themſelves in ſin, upon the account of God's forbearance, and long-ſuffering towards them, there cannot be a more certain ſign that his patience is very near its end towards that ſoul. It is time for God to put an end to his patience, when it is made an encouragement to ſin; God cannot ſuffer ſo vile an abuſe of his glorious patience, nor endure to ſee it turned into wantonneſs: this quickly brings up ſin to its finiſhing act, and perfection, and then patience is juſt upon finiſhing alſo. That patience is thus abuſed, appears from Eccleſ. viii. 11. and when it is ſo abuſed, look for a ſudden change. O therefore beware of provoking God, for now the day of patience is certainly near its end with ſinners, Prov. i. 24, 25, 26. "Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have "ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have "ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: "I alſo will laugh at your calamity, and mock when your fear "cometh; when your fear cometh as deſolation, and your de"ſtruction cometh as a whirlwind." Ah, when ſinners ſcoff, and mock at the threatnings of God, and bear themſelves up upon his patience, as that which will never crack under them; then look out for a whirlwind, a ſudden tempeſt of wrath, which will hurry ſuch ſouls into hell. Then miſery comes like a ſtorm blowing furiouſly from all quarters. Well, the hea-

vens are yet clear over you, but a ſtorm is nigh, and may certainly be prelaged from ſuch vile abuſes of the glorious patience of Chriſt towards you. That is the firſt exhortation, try not the patience of Chriſt, by any further delays.

Exhort. 2. Admire Chriſt's patience and forbearance of you until now, that he hath not cut you off in your ſin, but lengthened out his patience unto this day, and brought about your ſalvation by his long-ſuffering towards you. Here now I muſt change my voice, and turn it unto thoſe whoſe hearts the Lord hath opened: Stand amazed at the riches of his grace towards you, and ſee that you account this long-ſuffering of God to be your ſalvation; for in plain truth it is ſo: your ſalvation was bound up in Chriſt's forbearance. If Chriſt had not borne as he did, you had not been where you are. I could heartily wiſh, that all the time you can redeem from the neceſſary employments you have in the world, may now be ſpent in an humble, thankful admiration of this admirable grace, and patience of Chriſt, and anſwerable duties to the intentions, and ends thereof. To this end, I ſhall ſubjoin divers weighty conſiderations, which, methinks, ſhould melt every heart wherein the leaſt dram of ſaving grace is found.

Conſid. 1. Bethink yourſelves of the great, and manifold provocations you have given the Lord to put an end to all further patience towards you; not only in the days of your vanity, and unregeneracy, but even ſince your reconciliation to him. Do you not believe thouſands of ſinners are now in the depths of hell, who never provoked the Lord at a higher rate than you have done? Were you not herded once among the vileſt of ſinners? 1 Cor. vi. 11. "And ſuch were ſome of you;" as vile as the vileſt among them: yet you are waſhed in the blood of Chriſt, and your companions roaring in the loweſt hell; or if your lives were more clean, ſure your hearts and natures were as filthy as theirs. And certainly, your ſins, ſince the time of reconciliation, have had ſpecial aggravations in them, enough to put an end to all further mercies towards you. Light and love have aggravated theſe ſins, and yet the Lord will not caſt you off.

Conſid. 2. How often have you been upon the very brink of hell, in the days of your unregeneracy? Every ſickneſs, and every danger of life which you have eſcaped in thoſe days, was a marvellous eſcape from the everlaſting wrath of God. Had thy diſeaſe prevailed one degree further, thou hadſt been paſt hope, and out of the reach of mercy's arm now. Doubtleſs ſome of you can remember when, in ſuch and ſuch a diſeaſe,

you were like a ſhip riding in a furious ſtorm by one cable, and two or three of the ſtrands of that cable were ſnapt aſunder. So it hath been with you, the thread of life how weak ſoever, hath held till the bonds of union betwixt Chriſt and your ſouls are faſtened, and the eternal hazard over. This is admirable grace.

Conſid. 3. How often has death come up into your windows, entered into your houſes, fetched off your neareſt relations; but had no commiſſion to carry you out with them, becauſe the Lord had a deſign of mercy upon your ſouls?

This cannot but affect a gracious heart, that God ſhould ſmite ſo near, and yet ſpare you.

Conſid. 4. Laſtly, This is affecting, yea, very tranſporting, that God hath not only given you time beyond others, but in that time the precious opportunities, and means of your ſalvation, both external, and internal; there is the very marrow, and kernel of the mercy. Had God lengthened out his patience for a while, but given you no means of ſalvation, or afforded you the means, but denied you the bleſſing, and efficacy of them; at the moſt it could have been but a reprieve from hell: But for the Lord to give you the goſpel, and with the goſpel to ſend down his ſpirit, to perſuade and open thy heart to Chriſt; here is the riches of his goodneſs, as well as forbearance.

Exhort. 3. This doctrine of the patience of Chriſt exhorts all that have felt it, to exerciſe a Chriſt-like patience towards others; as you have found the benefit of divine patience yourſelves, ſee that you exerciſe the meekneſs, and long-ſuffering of Chriſtians towards thoſe that have wronged, and injured you. Who ſhould ſhew patience more than thoſe that have found it? Do not be ſevere, ſhort, and quick with others, who have lived yourſelves ſo many years upon the long-ſuffering of God. We are poor, ſhort-ſpirited creatures, quick to revenge injuries; but O had God been ſo to us, miſerable had our condition been: Chriſt hath made this duty the very ſcope of that excellent parable, Mat. xviii. from ver. 25. onward, where the king takes an account of his ſervants, reckoning with them one by one, and amongſt them finds one which owed him ten thouſand talents, and having not to pay, commands him, his wife and children, and all he had to be ſold, and payment to be made; but the ſervant falling down, and begging patience, his Lord was moved with compaſſion, and looſed him, and not only forbore, but forgave the debt: One would think the heart of this man ſhould have been a foundation of compaſſion towards

others; but see the deep corruption of nature, the same servant finding one of his fellow-servants which owed him but a hundred pence, laid hands on him, and took him by the throat. Alas, the wrongs done to us are but trifles, compared with our injuries done to God; where others have wronged you once, you have wronged God a thousand times. Methinks the patience of Christ towards you, should melt your hearts into an ingenuous easiness to forgive others; especially, considering that an unforgiving spirit is a dreadful sign of an unforgiven person.

Exhort. 4. Burden not the patience of Christ after your admission of him, and reconciliation to him; let it suffice that you tried his patience long enough before, give him no new exercises now he is come to dwell in, and with you for ever. There are two ways wherein God's own people do greatly provoke him after their reconciliation.

1. By sluggishness in duty.
2. By sinning against light.

1. By sluggishness, and deadness of spirit, in the ways of duty and obedience, turning a deaf ear to the calls and motions of Christ's spirit exciting them to the sweet and pleasant duties of religion. We have had a sad instance of this in the spouse, Cant. v. 2, 3. "It is the voice of my beloved that "knocketh, saying, open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, "my undefiled: for my head is filled with dew, and my locks "with the drops of the night." One would think that Christ might have opened the heart of his own spouse with less solicitation, and importunate arguments, than he here useth; what wife could shut the door upon her own dear husband, and bar him out of his own house? And yet see the lazy excuse she makes, ver. 3. "I have put off my coat, how shall I put it on? "I have washed my feet, how shall I defile them?"

O the sluggishness of the flesh, even in regenerate persons! those that have opened the door to Christ by regeneration, even they do often shut the door against Christ in the hours and seasons of communion with him. Strange, that such a suitor as Christ should be put by, moving, and calling to such heavenly, pleasant exercises, as communion with him is; but flesh will be flesh, even in the most spiritual Christians: Little do we know what a grief this is to Christ, and loss to us.

2. Many grieve Christ's spirit, and sorely try his patience, even after reconciliation, by sinning against light and love: That caution, Eph. iv. 30. is not without weighty cause. "And

" grieve not the holy ſpirit of God, by which you are ſealed to " the day of redemption."

Do we thus requite the Lord? Is this the return we make him for all his admirable kindneſs, and unparalleled love towards us? Certainly Chriſt can put up a thouſand injuries from his enemies, eaſier than ſuch affronts from his own people. Did you not promiſe him better obedience? Did you not engage to more holineſs and watchfulneſs, in the day that you ſued out your pardon, and made up your peace with him? Are all thoſe vows and covenants forgotten? If you have forgotten them, God hath not.

Exhort. 5. Improve the time that remains in this world with double diligence, becauſe you made Chriſt wait ſo long, and caſt away ſo great a part of your life, before you opened your hearts to receive him. The morning of your life, which was certainly the freſheſt and freeſt part of it, was no better than time loſt with many of us; all the days of your unregeneracy Chriſt was ſhut out, and vanity ſhut into your hearts: you never began to live till Chriſt gave you life, and that was late in the day with many of you. How ſhould this provoke to extraordinary diligence in thoſe few remains of time we have yet to enjoy? It was Auſtin's lamentation, *O Lord, it repents me*, ſaith he, *that I loved thee ſo late.* This conſideration excited Paul to extraordinary diligence for Chriſt. It made him fly up and down the world, as a *Seraphim*, in a flame of holy zeal for Chriſt. Thoſe that have much to write, and are almoſt come to the end of their paper, had need write cloſe. Friends, you have ſomething to do for God on earth, which you cannot do for him in heaven, Iſa. xxxviii. 18, 19. You that have carnal relations, have ſomething to do for them here, which you cannot do in heaven. You can now counſel, exhort and pray, in order to their converſion and ſalvation; but when you are gone down to the grave, theſe opportunities of ſervice are cut off.

Exhort. 6. Let us all be aſhamed and humbled for the baſeneſs of our hearts and natures, which made Chriſt wait at the door ſo long, before we opened to him. O what wretched hearts have we! that were no more affected with the groans of Chriſt's heart, than with the groans of a beaſt, nor ſo much neither, if that beaſt were our own. O the vileneſs of nature, to make the prince of the kings of the earth, bringing pardon and ſalvation with him, to ſtand ſo long unanſwered! Let who will cry up the goodneſs of nature, I am ſure we have reaſon to look upon the vileneſs of it with amazement and horror. You could not have found in your hearts to make the pooreſt beggar

wait so long at your door, as you have made Christ wait upon you.

Exhort. 7. Lastly, Let us all bless and admire the Lord Jesus for the continuation of his patience, not to ourselves only, but to that whole sinful nation in which we live. We thought the treaty of peace had been ended with us; many good men looking upon the iniquities and abominations of these times, considering the vanities and backsliding of professors, the heaven-daring provocations of this atheistical age, concluded in their own hearts, that God would make England another Shiloh. Many faithful ministers of Christ said within themselves, God hath no more work for us to do, and we shall have no more opportunities to work for God: when lo, beyond the thoughts of all hearts, the merciful and long-suffering Redeemer makes one return more to these nations, renews the treaty, and with compassion rolled together, speaks to us this day, as to Ephraim of old, how shall I deliver thee? look upon this day, this unexpected day of mercy, as the fruit and acquisition of the intercession of your great advocate in heaven, answerable to that, Luke xiii. 7, 8, 9. Well, God hath put us upon one trial more: if now we bring forth fruit, well; if not, the ax lies at the root of the tree. Once more Christ knocks at our doors, the voice of the bridegroom is heard; those sweet voices, *Come unto me, open to me:* your opening to Christ now, will be unto you as the valley of Achor, for a door of hope. But what if all this should be turned into wantonness and formality? What if your obstinacy and infidelity should wear out the remains of that little strength and time left you, and that former labours and sorrows have left your ministers? Then *actum est de nobis*, we are gone for ever; then farewel gospel, ministers, reformation, and all, because we knew not the time of our visitation. What was the dismal doom of God, upon the fruitless vineyard? Isa. v. 5. "I will take away the hedge thereof, and "it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and "it shall be trodden down: I will also command the clouds, "that they rain not upon it." The hedge and the wall are the spiritual and providential presence of God; these are the defence and safety of his people; the clouds and the rain are the sweet influences of gospel-ordinances. If the hedge be broken down, God's pleasant plants will soon be eaten up; and if the clouds rain not upon them, their root will be rottenness, and their blossom go up as dust; our churches will soon become as the mountains of Gilboa: therefore see that you know and improve the time of your visitation.

III. *Use of consolation.*

I shall wind up this fourth doctrine, in two or three words of consolation, to those that have answered, and are now preparing to answer the design and end of Jesus Christ in all his patience towards them, by their compliance with his great design and end therein. O blessed be God, and let his high praises be for ever in our mouths, that at last Christ is like to obtain his end upon some of us, and that all do not receive the grace of God in vain. And there be three considerations able to wind up your hearts to the height of praise, if the Lord hath now made them indeed willing to open to the Lord Jesus.

Consideration 1. The faith and obedience of your hearts makes it evident, that the Lord's waiting upon you hitherto hath been in pursuance of his design of electing love. What was the reason God would not take you away by death, though you passed so often upon the very brink of it, in the days of your unregeneracy? And what, think you, was the very reason of the revocation of your gospel-liberties when they were quite out of sight, and almost out of hope? why surely this was the reason, that you, and such as you are, might be brought to Christ at last. Therefore though the Lord let you run on so long in sin, yet still he continued your life, and the means of your salvation, because he had a design of mercy and grace upon you. And now the time of mercy, even the set time is come, *Praise ye the Lord.*

Consid. 2. You may also see the sovereignty and freeness of divine grace in your vocation: your hearts resisted all along the most powerful means, and importunate calls of Christ; and would have resisted still, had not free and sovereign grace overpowered them when the time of love was come. Ah, it was not the tractableness of thine own will, the easy temper of thy heart to be wrought upon; the Lord let thee stand long enough in the state of nature to discover that; there was nothing in nature but obstinacy and enmity. Thou didst hear as many powerful sermons, melting prayers, and didst see as many awakening providences before thy heart was opened to Christ, as thou hast since: yet thy heart never opened till now; and why did it open now? Because now the spirit of God joined himself to the word; victorious grace went forth in the word to break the hardness, and conquer the rebellions of thy heart. The gospel was now preached (as the apostle speaks, 1 Pet. i. 12.) "with "the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven, which things, (saith "he) the angels desire to look into." Ah friends, it is a glorious sight, worthy of angelical observation and admiration, to

behold the effects of the gospel preached, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; to see, when the Spirit comes along with the word, the blind eyes of sinners opened, and they brought into a new world of ravishing objects; to behold fountains of tears flowing for sin, out of hearts lately as hard as the rocks; to see all the bars of ignorance, prejudice, custom, and unbelief, fly open at the voice of the gospel; to see rebels against Christ laying down their arms at his feet, come upon the knee of submission, crying, "Lord, I will rebel no more;" to see the proud heart centered and wrapt up in its own righteousness, now stripping itself naked, loading itself with all shame and reproach, and made willing that its own shame should go to the Redeemer's glory. These, I say, are sights which angels desire to look into.

Certainly your hearts were more tender, and your wills more apt to yield and bend in the days of your youth, than they were now, when sin had so hardened them, and long-continued custom riveted and fixed them, yet then they did not, and now they do yield to the calls and invitations of the gospel. Ascribe all to sovereign grace, and say, "Not unto us, not unto us, but "to thy name give the glory." The observation and experience of our own hearts will furnish us with arguments enough to resist all temptations of self-glorifying and conceit.

Certainly you were born not of flesh, nor of blood, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Consid. 3. Lastly, This is a comfortable consideration, that he that waited upon you so long, and won your hearts at last; that hath gained you at the expence of so much pains and patience, will not now forsake you. Poor souls, I question not but there are many fears and jealousies within you, that all this will come to nothing, and you shall perish at last. Divers things foment these jealousies within your hearts: The weakness of your own graces, which alas, are but in their infancy; the sense you have of your own corruptions, and the great strength they still retain: The subtilty of Satan, who employs all his policies to reduce you; sometimes roaring after his escaped prey with hideous injections, which make your souls to tremble; sometimes the discouraging apprehensions of the difficulties of religion, how far the spirituality of active obedience, and the difficulty of passive obedience is above your strength; sometimes feeling within yourselves sad alterations, by the hiding of God's face, and withdrawment of sweet and sensible communion with him. These, and such like things as these, cause many a qualm to come over your hearts; but chear up,

Chriſt will not loſe at laſt what he purſued ſo long; he that waited ſo many years for thy ſoul, will never caſt it away now he hath ſeated himſelf in the poſſeſſion of it.

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SERMON V.

REV. iii. 20. *Behold I ſtand at the door,* [*and knock*] &c.

IN the former point we have ſeen the Redeemer's poſture, a poſture of condeſcending humility, rather the poſture of a ſervant than the Lord of all; *Behold I ſtand at the door.* We now come to conſider his action, or motion for entrance, I ſtand *and knock:* This metaphorical action of knocking, ſignifies nothing elſe but the motions made by Chriſt for entrance into the ſouls of ſinners; and affords us this fifth obſervation.

Doctrine 5. *That every conviction of conſcience, and motion upon the affections of ſinners, is a knock of Chriſt from heaven for entrance into their ſouls.*

This action of knocking is aſcribed ſometimes to the ſoul, and is expreſſive of its deſires to come into the gracious preſence and communion of God; ſo Mat. vii. 7. "To him that knocks "it ſhall be opened," *i. e.* to him that ſeeks by importunate prayer, fellowſhip and communion with the Lord: But here it is applied to Chriſt, and is expreſſive of his importunate deſire to come into union and communion with the ſouls of ſinners. Here I ſhall open to you the following particulars:

1. What are the doors of the ſoul at which Chriſt knocks.
2. What his knocking at theſe doors implies.
3. By what inſtruments he knocks at them.
4. In what manner he performs this action.

Firſt, What are the *doors* of the ſoul at which Chriſt knocks. You all know that term, Chriſt here uſeth, cannot be proper but metaphorical; it is a figurative ſpeech, the *door* is that part which is introductive into the houſe, and whatever is introductive into the ſoul, that is the door of the ſoul. Now in the ſoul of man there are many powers and faculties that have this uſe, and are of an introductive nature, to let things into the ſoul of man. Some are more outward, as we may ſpeak comparatively; and ſome more inward, as the doors of our houſes are.

Chriſt knocks orderly at them all, one after another, for the operations of the Spirit diſturb not the order of nature.

1. The first door that opens and lets into the soul is the *understanding*: nothing passes into the soul, but it must first come through this door of the understanding; nothing can touch the heart, or move the affections, but what hath first touched the understanding. Hence we read so often in scripture of the opening of the understanding, that being, as it were, the fore-door of the soul.

2. Within this is the royal gate of the soul, *viz. The will of man*, that noble and imperial power. Many things may pass into the mind, or understanding of a man, and yet be able to get no further; the door of the will may be shut against them. There were many precious truths of God let into the understandings of the Heathens, by the light of nature, but could never get further, their hearts and wills were locked, and shut up against them; as you may see, Rom. i. 18. "They held "the truths of God in unrighteousness;" that is, they bound and imprisoned those common notices the law of nature impressed upon their minds, concerning the being and nature of God, and the duties of both tables. These truths could get no further into their souls, and, which is of sad and dreadful consideration, Christ himself stands betwixt these two doors, in the souls of many persons; he is got into their understandings, and consciences, they are convinced of the possibility, and necessity of obtaining Jesus Christ, but still the door of their will is barred against him, which drew from him that sad complaint, John v. 40. "You will not come unto me that you might have life." When this door of the will is once effectually opened, then all the inner doors of the affections are quickly set open to receive, and welcome him; desire, joy, delight, and all the rest, stand open to him: These are the doors at which the Redeemer knocks.

Secondly, Next we must consider what is meant by Christ's knocking at these doors, and what that action implies. In the general, knocking is nothing else but an action significative of the desires of one that is without, to come in; it is a sign appointed to that end: And what is Christ's knocking, but a signification to the soul of his earnest desires to come into it; a notice given to the soul of Christ's willingness to possess it for his own habitation? And it is as much as if Christ should say, soul, thou art the house that was built by my hand, purchased, and redeemed by my blood; I have an unquestionable right to it, and now demand entrance. More particularly, there are divers great things implied in this gracious act of Christ's knocking at the door of the soul.

1. It implies the ſpecial favour, and diſtinguiſhing grace, and goodneſs of Jeſus Chriſt, that he will ſtand, and knock at our doors, when he paſſes by ſo great a part of the world, never giving one ſuch knock, or call, at other men's doors; it is certainly a moſt glorious, and admirable condeſcenſion, and favour of heaven, and wherever it is ſucceſsful, it ſpeaks a man highly favoured of God. O that when Chriſt paſſes by the ſouls of thouſands, and millions, that would certainly afford him as comfortable an habitation as our ſouls can do, and will not give one effectual knock, or call, at their doors, all the days of their life; that he will pleaſe to turn aſide to thy ſoul, and wait, and knock there for entrance: I ſay, here is one of the greateſt acts of favour that can be ſhewn to the ſoul of a ſinner. How many ſouls be there in the world, equal in natural dignity to yours, and of ſweeter natural tempers, whom yet the Lord Jeſus lets alone, in the quiet poſſeſſion of *ſatan*, Luke xi. 21. There is a deep ſilence, and ſtilneſs in their conſciences, no ſtirrings, nor diſturbances by convictions, but, through a dreadful judgment of God, they are left in a deep ſleep; and if their conſciences at any time begin to grumble, how ſoon are they huſhed, and quieted again, by *ſatan?* What the condition of the world was in former ages, we may ſee in Acts xiv. 16. "Who in times paſt ſuffered all nations to walk in their own "way." O! it is the greateſt mercy in the world for the ſleepy conſcience of a ſinner to be rouzed by convictions, becauſe it is introductive to all other ſpiritual mercies. I confeſs this act of grace is little apprehended by the ſons and daughters of men; much rather would poor ſinners be let alone, than be thus diſturbed by troubleſome convictions; and when Chriſt diſturbs their reſt, how do they ſtartle at the knocks of his Word and Spirit? How angry be they that they cannot be let alone to enjoy their quiet ſleep in ſin, till the flames of hell awaken them? Mr. Fenner, that great and eminent inſtrument of God in this work, tells us, in one of his ſermons, how it fared with a certain man that came to hear him preach: It ſeems the word had got entrance into his conſcience, and gave it a terrible alarm, and as he was going home, ſome that followed him, heard him thus blaming and bemoaning himſelf: 'O what a fool, what 'a beaſt was I, to come under this ſermon to-day? I ſhall 'never have peace and quietneſs any more.' And what is the reaſon that ſmooth and general preaching is ſo much applauded and affected in the world, and cloſe convincing doctrine ſo much ſhunned and hated, but this, that ſinners are very loath to be diſquieted, and have their conſciences thoroughly awakened?

Well, whatever your apprehenſions be, certainly it is an unſpeakable mercy for Chriſt to knock, and diſquiet the ſouls of ſinners by his calls. That is the firſt thing.

2. The next thing implied in this action of Chriſt, is this, That the firſt motions towards the recovery and ſalvation of ſinners begin not in themſelves, but in Chriſt: We never knock at heaven's door by prayer, till Chriſt hath firſt knocked at our doors by his Spirit: Did not Chriſt move firſt, there would be no motions after him in our hearts; we move towards him, becauſe he hath firſt moved upon our ſouls. Chriſt might ſit long enough unſought, and undeſired, did he not make the firſt motion. All our motions are ſecondary, and conſequential motions. Iſa. lxv. 1. "I am found of them that ſought me "not." As we love him becauſe he firſt loved us, ſo we ſeek after him becauſe he firſt ſought us. Alas! poor ſinners are as well ſatisfied, as any people in the world can be, to lie faſt aſleep in the devil's arms. When the Spirit of God goes forth with the word of conviction, he finds the ſouls of men in the very ſame poſture which the angels, that had ſurveyed the world, reported the whole earth to be in. Zech. i. 11. "Behold all "the earth ſitteth ſtill, and is at reſt." Every man ſettled, and ſatisfied in his own way. What a ſtrange ſtilneſs, and midnight ſilence is there amongſt ſinners? Not a ſigh, not a cry to be heard for ſin: So the Pſalmiſt, Pſal. xiv. 2. repreſents the caſe of ſinners. "The Lord looked down from heaven "upon the children of men, to ſee if there were any that did "underſtand, and ſeek God. They are all gone aſide," *&c.* There is one thing that is admirably ſtrange in this caſe, that even thoſe men and women, whoſe rattles of earthly pleaſures and delights, which brought them into this ſleep and ſecurity, are taken away from them by the hand of Providence, I mean their eſtates, health, children, *&c.* yet they awake not; there are no ſtirrings after God. O what a dead ſleep hath ſin caſt the ſouls of ſinners into! You have a notable ſcripture to this purpoſe, in Job xxxv. 9, 10. they are the words of Elihu, concerning men and women under grievous oppreſſion, perſons ſqueezed and ground by the cruel hands of wicked men: "By "reaſon of the multitude of oppreſſions they make the oppreſſed "to cry; they cry out by reaſon of the arm of the mighty: "But none ſaith, where is God my Maker, who giveth ſongs "in the night?" *i. e.* Succour, comfort, and refreſhment to the afflicted. Here are men turned out of their eſtates, thrown into priſons, caſt upon all extremities, and miſeries; and what

do these poor creatures do? Why, saith he, they cry by reason of their oppression: O my father, or my mother, my wife, my child, my estate, my liberty; but none saith, Where is my God? O my sin, or my misery by reason of sin! "Where is "he that giveth songs in the night?" The people of God when they lie musing upon their beds under affliction, they have their "songs in the night;" in the midst of the multitude of their troubled thoughts within them, the comforts of God delight their souls. These are their songs in the night, but no such word, or thought, in carnal men. How plain is it, that all the first motions of salvation have their first spring, and rise, in God, and not in us? That is the second thing implied in Christ's knocking.

3. Christ's knocking at the door of the heart, implies the method of the Spirit in conversion to be congruous, and agreeable, to the nature of man's soul. Mark Christ's expression in the text; he doth not say, "Behold I come to the door," and break it open by violence; no, Christ makes no forcible entries, whether sinners will or no; he will come in by consent of the will, or not at all. I stand and knock; if any man open the door, I will come in to him. There is a great difference between a friendly admission by consent, and a forcible entrance: In a forcible entrance bars of iron are brought to break open the door; but in a friendly admission one knocks, and the other opens. Forcible actions are unsuitable to the nature of the will, whose motions are free and spontaneous; therefore it is said, Psalm cx. 3. "The people shall be willing in the day of "thy power." It is true, the power of God is upon the will of man in the day of his conversion, or else it would never open to Christ; but yet that power of God doth not act against the freedom of man's will, by co-action and force; no, but of unwilling he makes it willing; taking away the obstinacy, and reluctancy of the will by the efficacy of his grace, which some divines call *victrix delectatio*, a sweet and pleasant victory; and so the door of the will still opens freely. Hosea xi. 4. "I drew "them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." *I drew them*, there is almighty power; but how did this power draw them? with the cords of a man, *i. e.* with rational arguments, convincing the judgment. Beasts are driven, and forced, but men are drawn by reason, and will not move without it, if they act like themselves. It must be confessed, that when the day of God's power is come for the bringing home of a poor sinner to Christ, he cannot resist the power of God's Spirit, that draws him effectually: "Every one that hath

" heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me;" yet ſtill the ſoul comes freely by the conſent of his will; for this is the method of Chriſt in drawing ſouls to him. There is in the day of a ſinner's converſion a *kid*, an *offer* made for the will, both by ſatan and Chriſt; ſatan bids riches, honours, and pleaſures, with eaſe and quietneſs to the fleſh, in the enjoyment of them: Abide where thou art, ſaith ſatan, remain with me, and thou ſhalt eſcape all the perſecutions, loſſes, and troubles of the world, which conſcience entangles other men in; thou ſhalt draw thy life through peace and pleaſure, to thy dying day. O, ſaith the fleſh, this is a good motion, what can be better for me? But then ſaith Chriſt, doſt thou not conſider that all theſe enjoyments will quickly be at an end, and what ſhall become of thee then? Behold, I offer thee the free, full, and final pardon of thy ſins; peace and reconciliation with God, treaſures in heaven, all theſe ſhall be thine, with troubles, reproaches, and perſecutions in this world. The underſtanding, and conſcience of a ſinner, being convinced of the vanity of earthly things, and the indiſpenſable neceſſity of pardon and peace with God; I ſay, when a convinced judgment hath duely balanced theſe things, and laid them before the will, and the Spirit of God puts forth his power in the renovation of it; it moves towards Chriſt freely, and yet cannot, according to its natural order, act otherwiſe than it doth. And, doubtleſs, this is the true meaning of that expreſſion, ſo often miſtaken and abuſed, in Luke xiv. 23. " Compel them to come in." What! by forcing men againſt the light of their conſciences? No, no; to the ſhame of many Proteſtants let us hear the gloſs of Stella, a Popiſh commentator upon the place. ' Chriſt (ſaith he) com-' pels men to come in, by ſhewing to their will ſuch an excel-' ling good as it cannot but embrace:' For *voluntas naturaliter fertur in bonum*, the will is naturally carried to the beſt good. And thus the Spirit works upon the ſoul harmoniouſly, and agreeable to its own nature. That is the third thing implied in Chriſt's knocking.

4. Chriſt's knocking at the door of the ſoul, manifeſtly implies the immediate acceſs of the Spirit of God unto the ſoul of man; that he can come to the very innermoſt door of the ſoul at his pleaſure, and make what impreſſion upon it he pleaſeth. As for other inſtruments uſed in this work, they have no ſuch privilege, or power; Miniſters can but knock at the external door of the ſenſes. Thine eyes ſhall ſee thy teachers, we can ſee their perſons and hear their voices; we can reaſon with

ſinners, and plead with their ſouls; but awaken them we cannot, open their hearts we cannot; we can only lodge our meſſages in their ears, and leave it to the Spirit of God to make it effectual. This is a royalty belonging unto the Spirit of God, incommunicable to angels, or men; if an angel from heaven were the preacher, he could not give one immediate ſtroke to the conſcience, much leſs can man; we have no dominion over your conſciences. The key of the doors of your ſouls hang not at our girdles, but are in the hands of Chriſt, Rev. iii. 7. "He hath the key of David, he openeth, and no man ſhutteth; "and he ſhutteth, and no man openeth." The conſcience, and all the faculties lie naked and open to the ſtroke of God's Spirit; he can wound them and heal them, and make what impreſſions he pleaſeth upon them. Learn hence what need there is, both for miniſters and people, before they enter upon the ſolemn ordinances of God, to lift up their hearts by prayer for the bleſſing, and power of the Spirit upon them. Lord, ſend forth thy Spirit, pour it forth upon, and with thy word. Ah! how many ſermons have we preached, and you heard, and yet there is no opening! Theſe are the four things implied in Chriſt's knocking at the door, *viz.* condeſcending grace: All firſt motions being in God, the motions of his Spirit are congruous, and agreeable to the nature of the ſoul; and that his Spirit can have immediate acceſs to the innermoſt faculties, and powers of the ſoul, at his pleaſure. Now in the next place let us conſider,

Thirdly, By what inſtruments Chriſt knocks at the doors, that is, the judgment, conſcience, and will of a ſinner. And theſe are two, *viz.*

1. His word. 2. His providence.

Here my work will be to ſhew you how the Spirit of God makes uſe both of the word and works of God, to rouze and open the conſciences and hearts of ſinners. Theſe are the two hammers or inſtruments of the Spirit, by which he knocks at the door of the heart.

1. The word written or preached, but eſpecially preached; to this Chriſt gives the preference above all other inſtruments employed about this work; and, anſwerably, the word is called God's hammer, Jer. xxii. 29. "Is not my word like fire, and "as the hammer which breaketh the rocks in pieces?" By this hammer Chriſt raps at the door of a ſinner's ſoul, to give warning that he is there. The Spirit of God can open the heart immediately if he pleaſeth; but he will honour his word in this work. And therefore, when Lydia's heart was to be

opened, Paul, the great gospel-preacher, must be invited, even by an angel, to come over to Macedonia, and assist in that blessed work, Acts xvi. 9. Lydia was to be converted, her heart must be opened to Christ; the angel could not do it, but calls for the help of the Apostle, God's appointed instrument to carry on that work. "I have made thee (saith God to Paul) a minister and a witness to open their eyes, and turn them from "darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God," Acts xxvi. 13. Now there be three ways in which the Spirit uses the word, as his hammer, in knocking at the door of the soul.

(1.) He knocks by the particular convictions of the word upon the conscience; this knock, by conviction, rings and sounds through all the rooms and chambers of the soul; particular and effectual conviction wounds to the very centre of the soul. Ah, when the word shall come home by the Spirit's particular application, like that of Nathan's to David, *Thou art the man;* then all the powers of the soul are roused and alarmed; now it pierces as a two-edged sword, Heb. iv. 12. divides the soul and spirit, the superior and inferior faculties of it; cuts down by the back-bone, lays open the secret guilt and innermost thoughts of a man's heart, before which the sinner cannot stand. The secrets of his heart are made manifest; and falling down on his face he must acknowledge that God is in the word of a truth, 1 Cor. xiv. 24. O these convictions of the word are such a rap, such a knock at the door of the conscience, as will never be forgotten, no not in heaven, to all eternity.

(2.) Christ knocks in the word by its terrible comminations and awful threatenings, menacing the soul that opens not with eternal ruin; these are dreadful knocks: O sinner, saith Christ, wilt thou not open? Shall all the tenders of my grace made to thee be in vain? Know then that this thy obstinacy shall be thy damnation. Thus the word denounces ruin, in the name of the great and terrible God, to all wilful impenitents and obstinate unbelievers, John iii. 36. "He that believeth not the Son, "shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." O dreadful sound! like unto which is that, John viii. 24. "If ye "believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins:" *q. d.* Thy *mittimus* for hell shall be made and signed. Will you not come to me that you might have life? Then will I foretel what death you shall die, you shall even *die in your sins.* O it were better for thee to die any kind of death, than to die in thy sins. These are loud knocks of the word, terrible sounds, yet no

more than needs to ſtartle the drouſy conſciences of ſinners. And then,

(3.) The ſpirit knocks by the gracious invitations of the word, the ſweet allurements and gracious inſinuations of it; and without this no heart would ever open to Chriſt. It is not froſt and ſnow, ſtorms and thunder, but the gentle diſtilling dews, and cheriſhing ſun-beams, that make the flowers open in the ſpring. The terrors of the law may be preparative, but the grace of the goſpel is that which effectually opens the ſinner's heart. The obdurate flint will ſooner fly when ſmitten upon the ſoft pillow, than upon the anvil. Now the goſpel abounds with alluring invitations to draw the will, and open the heart of a ſinner; ſuch is that, Mat. xi. 28. "Come unto me "all ye that labour, and are heavy laden; and I will give you "reſt." O what a charming voice is here! he that conſiders it, may well wonder what heart in the world can reſiſt it: like unto this is that in Iſa. lv. 1. "Ho, every one that thirſteth, "come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money let him "come; yea, let him come and buy wine and milk without mo-"ney and without price." *q. d.* Come, ſinner, come; though thou have no qualifications, nor worthineſs, nor righteouſneſs of thy own; though thou be but a heap of ſin and vileneſs, yet come: my grace is a *gift*, not a *ſale*: and ſuch is that in John vii. 37. "In the laſt day, the great day of the feaſt, Jeſus ſtood "up and cried, If any man thirſt let him come to me and "drink." *q. d.* My grace is not a ſealed fountain, it is free and open to the greateſt of ſinners; if they thirſt, they are invited to come and drink. This is that oil of the goſpel grace which makes the key turn ſo pleaſantly, and effectually, amongſt all the croſs wards of man's will. And thus you ſee how the word preached becomes an inſtrument, in the Spirit's hand, to open the door of a ſinner's heart, at which it knocks by its mighty convictions, dreadful threats, and gracious invitations.

2. We next come to the ſecond *hammer*, by which the Spirit knocks at the ſinner's heart, and that is the providential works of God. Theſe, in ſubſerviency to the word, are of excellent uſe to awaken ſinners, and make them open their hearts to Chriſt. God hath magnified his word above all his name; yet there are ſome of the providential works of God greatly ſerviceable in this caſe; the word ſanctifies providences, and providences aſſiſt the word, and make it work. Now there are two ſorts of providential diſpenſations which the Lord Jeſus makes uſe of to gain entrance for him into the hearts of men, *viz.*

(1.) Judgments. (2.) Mercies.

(1.) Judgments and afflictions: the word of God many times works not till some stroke of God come to quicken and assist it; thus did the Lord open the heart of that monster of wickedness, Manasseh, the word would not work alone, but a smart rod quickened its operation: 2 Chron. xxxiii. 10, 11, 12. "And "the Lord spake to Manasseh, and to his people; but they "would not hearken. Wherefore the Lord brought upon "them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which "took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fet-"ters, and carried him to Babylon. And when he was in affic-"tion, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself "greatly before the God of his fathers."

Thus the heart of this man relented under the word assisted by the rod. Ah, it is good that God takes such a course with some sinners, else the word would do them no good: and to this purpose is that in Job xxxvi. 8, 9, 10. "And if they be "bound in fetters, and holden in cords of affliction; then he "sheweth them their work and their transgression, that they "have exceeded; and openeth their ears to discipline." This is that rough course the obstinacy of mens hearts makes necessary for their recovery, and therefore it is very observable, that some words of God have lain dead in some sinners hearts for years together, and at last have begun to work under some smart and close rod. Alas, while all things are pleasant and prosperous about us, the word hath but little operation and effect: Jer. xxii. 21, 22. "I spake unto thee in thy prosperity, but "thou saidst I will not hear: this hath been thy manner from "thy youth, that thou obeyedst not my voice. The wind "shall eat up all thy pastures, and thy lovers shall go into cap-"tivity; surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for "all thy wickedness." *q. d.* Your eyes are so dazzled with the beautiful flowers, and your ears so charmed with the Syren songs or earthly delights, that my wind can take no place upon you. Let an east-wind blow, and wither up these flowers; then the word shall work, and conscience resent the concernments of eternity. This course God is fain to take with many of you; here you sit from sabbath to sabbath under the word, and nothing takes place upon your hearts. Will you not hear the voice of my word? Go, death, saith God, smite that man's child dead, I will try what that will do; go poverty, and blast his estate, and see what that will do; go sickness, and smite his body, and shake him over the graves mouth, I will see what that will do. Thus God sends to sinners, that Absalom sent to Joab, who refused to come near him, till he set

fire to his field of corn, and then away comes Joab, 2 Sam. xiv. 29, 30, 31. And thus the Lord opened the heart of the Jaylor, by putting him into a fright, a panic fear of death, Acts xvi. 27. And thus doth the Lord deviſe means to bring back his baniſhed.

(2.) As God makes uſe of the hammer of judgments, ſo he makes uſe of mercies to make way for Chriſt into the hearts of men. Every mercy is a call, a knock of God: and truly if there be any ingenuity left unextinguiſhed in the heart, one would think mercy would prevail more than all the judgments in the world, Rom. ii. 4. "Knoweſt thou not that the good-"neſs of God leadeth thee to repentance?" *q. d.* Doſt thou not ſee the hand of mercy ſtretched out to lead thee into a corner, there to mourn over thy ſins committed againſt ſo gracious and merciful a God? By every mercy you receive, Chriſt doth, as it were, ſue you to open your hearts to him; they are ſo many gifts ſent from heaven to make way for Chriſt into your hearts. It would be an endleſs taſk to enumerate all the mercies beſtowed to this end upon the unregenerate: but ſurely this is the errand of them all; and the Lord takes it very ill when his end is not anſwered in them: hence is that complaint, Jer. v. 24. "Neither ſay they in their heart, let us now fear the Lord our "God, that giveth us rain, both the former and the latter, in "his ſeaſon." Some of you have been marvellouſly preſerved in times of common contagion and death, when thouſands have fallen at your right hand and left: then have you been preſerved or recovered, according to that, Exod. xv. 26. "I will put "none of thoſe diſeaſes upon thee, for I am the Lord that "healeth thee." I am *Jehovah Rophe*, the Lord the phyſician; many of you have been at the graves mouth, in many diſeaſes, others upon the deeps; yet the hand of mercy pulled you back, and ſuffered you not to drop into the grave and hell in the ſame moment. O what a knock was here given by the hand of mercy at thy hard heart! Certainly if men would but obſerve, they might ſee a ſtrange, marvellous working, and moulding of things by the hand of providence, for the production of thouſands of mercies for them: and if mercy would do the work, and win you over to Chriſt, many rods had been ſpared, which your obſtinacy hath made neceſſary. O ungrateful ſinners! doth your Redeemer thus woo and ſee you by ſo many gifts of mercy, and yet will you ſhut him out? *Do ye thus requite the Lord, O fooliſh people and unwiſe?* For which of all his benefits do your ungrateful ſouls ſhut the door upon him?

(3.) You see what Christ's knocking at the soul of a sinner implies, and by what instruments it is performed. In the last place, we will consider the manner how this action is performed in the ten following particulars, wherein much of the mystery of conversion will be opened; the Lord grant your experience may answer them. We cannot indeed exactly describe and mark all the footsteps of the Spirit, in this work, upon the souls of men; yet these things seem eminently observable.

1. The knocks of Christ at the sinner's heart are *silent* and *secret* to all persons in the world, except the soul itself at whose door he knocks; here be many hundreds of you this day under the word; if the Lord shall this day knock by conviction at any man's heart, none will hear that knock, but that man only; for it is a knock without sound or noise to any but the particular soul concerned in it. It was fore-prophesied of our Redeemer, and of this very act of his, Isa. xlii. 2. "He shall not cry, "nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." The kingdom of God cometh not into the souls of men with public observation: you read in 1 Cor. ii. 11. "No man knows "eth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man that is in "him." None knows what convictions another man's conscience feels, until he himself shall discover them; you hear the same sound of the gospel, but you hear not the inward strokes it gives to another man's conscience. Christ's approaches to the soul make no noise; little do we know what the spirit of Christ whispers in the ear of him that sits next us. It is said of the inward comforts of the spirit, *I will give him the hidden manna which no man knows but he that eateth of it.* This is true also of inward terrors and troubles. Christ's knocks by conviction are but a secret whisper of his spirit in the ear of a sinner, saying, thou art the man, this is thy case. That is the first thing in the manner of Christ's knocking, it is a silent knock without public sound.

2. These silent inward knocks of the spirit of Christ, though they are heard by none but the soul itself, yet do they greatly differ as to the terror, or mildness of them in different subjects. Some hear them with more terror and astonishment, others in a mild and gentle manner. When the Lord knocked at the Jaylor's conscience, Acts xvi. 29, 30. it was a terrible stroke; he called for a light, and sprang in like a man distracted; and trembling and astonished fell down at the apostles feet, crying, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Here was a terrible knock indeed, which almost affrighted his soul out of his body; it is

as if he had ſaid, tell me, for the Lord's ſake, and tell me quickly, whether there be any way of ſalvation, and where it lies, for I am a loſt man, an undone ſoul. But when the Lord opened the heart of Lydia, there were no ſuch terrors, the Lord ſpake to her in a more mild and gentle voice; as you ſee ver. 14. The ſpirit of God varies his method according to the temper of the ſoul he worketh on. Knotty pieces need greater wedges and harder blows to rive them aſunder, and as he directs his miniſters, Jude 22. to make a difference, to deal tenderly and compaſſionately with ſome; but others, to ſave with fear; ſo he himſelf obſerveth like different methods.

3. Some knocks of Chriſt are *ſucceſsful*, and obtain the deſired effect. He knocks, and the ſoul opens; but others are unſucceſsful; he knocks once, and again, by convictions, which may cauſe the conſcience, for the preſent, to ſtartle a little, but there is no opening to Chriſt by faith. O friends! this is of dreadful conſideration; Prov. i. 24. "I called, and you refuſ-"ed; I ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded." There is a call without an anſwer, a knock, and no opening; and theſe things are very common, eſpecially among the unconverted, that live under a lively goſpel-rouſing miniſtry. Of this Chriſt complains, Mat. xvi. 17. "Whereunto ſhall I liken this "generation? They are like unto children ſitting in the mar-"ket-place, and calling to their fellows, ſaying, We have pip-"ed unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned "unto you, but you have not lamented:" *q. d.* Neither the delicious airs, and melody of goſpel-grace, nor the mournful, and dreadful threats of damnation to unbelievers, avail any thing to open your hearts to embrace me; no voices from mount Gerezim, or mount Ebal, will prevail with you. Ah! how many ſad witneſſes unto this truth have I now before mine eyes! but God forbid it ſhould be thus all round: no, no, there be ſome ſouls who hear, and open, even every one that hath heard, and learned of the Father, John vi. 45. when the ſpirit of God puts forth his power with the word, then, and not till then, it becomes ſucceſsful.

4. Sometimes Chriſt knocks with a thick ſucceſſion of convictions, a quick repetition of his calls. Some men have had thouſands of convictions in a few years; for in this caſe the Lord ſaith, as it is Exod. iv. 8. "If they will not hearken to "the voice of the firſt ſign, yet they may believe the voice of "the latter ſign." And yet ſometimes neither the former, nor the latter avail any thing. "How oft would I have gathered "thy children, and ye would not?" Mat. xxiii. 37. How often?

intimating the many calls Christ gave Jerusalem to come unto him, yet all in vain. Obstinate sinners, Christ hath been knocking, and calling at some of your consciences, from your very childhood; thousands of convictions have been tried upon some of you, and yet, to this day, your souls are shut fast against him. The Lord hath waited, from year to year, for your answer, by this signifying how loath he is to part with you; such a time thou wast upon a sick bed, nigh unto death; at such a time under such a sermon, and then Christ knocked at thy soul: if all this be in vain, so many convictions as you have stifled, so many faggots you carry with you to hell, to increase your flames, and torments. Yet commonly those quick repetitions, and redoublings of the strokes of convictions end well; and it is a good sign, when one conviction revives another, and the Lord keeps the soul still waking. But O take heed, and try not his patience too long, lest the next stroke be more dreadful than all the former; not to open your hearts, but smite dead your hopes for heaven.

5. Sometimes Christ knocks *intermittingly*, knocking and stopping, a call and silence, and that at a considerable time and distance: a conviction this day, and, it may be, not another in many months. There be some aged sinners that have not had more than one or two remarkable rouzings of conscience in fifty or sixty years time, and then no more; do not think that the Lord will make his spirit always strive with men, Gen. vi. 3. no, there is a time when God saith to the word, convict the conscience of that man or woman no more, not a stroke more, by way of conviction, but henceforth be thou for obduration, not to open, but to shut him up, Isa. vi. 10. Reader, bethink thyself, how long was it since thy conscience was roused, and awakened? O saith one, seven or ten years ago I heard such a sermon which tore my conscience to pieces; I fell under such a providence, which roused and awakened all my fears; but since that time all hath been still, and quiet; the Lord give a second awakening, lest you awake with the flames of God's wrath about you. I observe, it is usual, when God works upon any very early, he knocks thus intermittingly: now the conscience is active, and full of trouble, then the vanities of youth extinguish these convictions again; but the Lord follows his design, and at last the conviction settles, and ends in conversion.

6. Christ sometimes knocks with both hands at once, with the word, and with the rod together; the latter in subserviency

to the former; and if ever the soul be like to open, it will open then, when ordinances and afflictions work together. The word smites the conscience with conviction, and at, or about the same time, providence smites the outward man with some affliction, to make the word work effectually; or, under some smart affliction, a suitable word is seasonably directed to the conscience: and thus *juncta juvant*, the one assisteth the other, and both together produce the desired effect. Thus the Lord wrought upon the Thessalonians, 1 Thes. i. 6. "And ye be-"came followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the "word in much affliction" A child dies, an estate is lost, or a sickness seizeth, at the time when conscience is prepared by a conviction from the word, or afflictions have prepared it for the word: the rod upon the back helps the word to work upon the heart, and if both these working in fellowship, will not do the work, there is little hope that any thing will do it.

7. Every knock of Christ disturbs the sinful rest of the soul; it rouseth guilt in the conscience, and puts the inner man into great distress, and trouble. Before Christ comes, and knocks at the door of the heart, all is still and quiet within; the soul is in a quiet sleep of sinful security, no fears or troubles molest its rest. Luke xi. 21. "When a strong man armed keepeth his "palace, his goods are in peace; but when a stronger than he "shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from "him all his armour wherein he trusted." The armour which Satan puts into the hands of sinners, to defend themselves against the convictive strokes of the word, are the general mercy of God, the outward duties of religion, partial reformations, *&c.* But when Christ comes by effectual conviction, he disarms the sinner of all these pleas, and then the soul sees what broken reeds it leaned upon. "When the commandment came, (saith "Paul) sin revived, and I died." Rom. vii. 9. *i. e.* all my vain hopes expired; no artifice of Satan can any longer quiet the sinner's conscience; he apprehends himself in a miserable condition, meditates an escape; farewel now to sound and quiet sleep: no peace, till out of danger.

8. Every effectual knock of Christ gives an alarm to hell, and puts Satan to all his shifts, and arts, to secure the possession of the convinced sinner. The devil is a jealous spirit, and when his interest is in danger, he bestirs himself to purpose; the time of conviction is an hour of temptation. "We wrestle not with flesh "and blood, (saith the apostle) but against principalities, a-"gainst powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this "world, against spiritual wickedness, (or wicked spirits) in

"high-places," or about heavenlies, Eph. vi. 12. The ſtrife betwixt *ſatan* and the ſoul, is now for no leſs than the prize of eternal life; it is now for all, or none; for life or death, for heaven or hell: The powers of hell are now all in arms to deſtroy convictions, and ſecure the poſſeſſion of the ſoul againſt Chriſt; as when a *granado* falls into a garriſon, the firſt care of the defendants is, to ſtifle, and choak it before it break. Whilſt Chriſt is ſpeaking by his Spirit in one ear, the devil is whiſpering in the other; and the things he whiſpers to quench convictions, are uſually ſuch as theſe: It is time enough yet, what need ſuch haſte? Enjoy thy pleaſures a little longer, thou mayeſt come to Chriſt, and be ſaved at laſt. If that will not do, then he changeth his voice: To what purpoſe wilt thou go to Chriſt? It is now too late, the time of grace is over; hadſt thou come to him in thy youth, and obeyed his firſt call, it had been ſomewhat; but now it is to no purpoſe. If this will not quiet the ſoul, then he ſaith, Thy ſins are too great to be pardoned, there is no hope for ſuch a prodigious ſinner as thou art. If the Lord help the ſoul to overcome this, by diſcovering to it the riches of mercy, pardoning the greateſt of ſinners; then he repreſents the multitudes which are in the ſame caſe with the convinced ſinner; Come, fear not, if it go ill with thee, it will be as bad for millions of men and women; if thou go to hell, thouſands will go with thee: But if the ſoul be loath to be damned for company, then he bids it look upon the train of troubles and afflictions that come along with Chriſt, and will certainly follow him, if the door be open to let him in: If Chriſt come in, reproaches, loſſes, and ſufferings, will certainly come in with him; troops of miſeries and calamities follow him; himſelf hath told thee ſo, and art thou mad, to ruin all thy comforts in the world, and plunge thyſelf into a ſea of trouble for what thine eyes never ſaw? But if the ſoul reply, theſe are more tolerable than damnation, better my fleſh ſuffer for a time, than my ſoul be caſt away for ever; then he repreſents the inſuperable difficulties of religion, what a hard thing it is to be ſaved, how many painful duties and acts of mortification the ſoul muſt paſs through. Thus you ſee what an alarm conviction gives to the powers of hell.

9. Every effectual knock of Chriſt is followed on, and new convictions revive old and former ones, and the Lord never leaves knocking till the door be opened; if one ſermon will not do, another ſhall; if one wound be plaiſtered and healed by the art of *ſatan*, a freſh wound ſhall be made; if a former conviction vaniſh, the next ſhall be ſealed upon the ſoul; and

when the Spirit of the Lord ſealeth a conviction upon the conſcience, raze it out who can? And here is the difference betwixt ſpecial and common convictions; common convictions come and go, they put the ſoul in a fright for a day or a month, and then trouble it no more for ever; but ſpecial convictions will be continued, one thing backs another; for Chriſt is in purſuit of the ſoul, and will give it chaſe, till at laſt he overtake, and come up with it.

10. *Laſtly*, All the knocks of Chriſt ceaſe and end, when the ſinner's day of grace is ended; this is of dreadful conſideration; when the time of mercy is over, no more ſtrivings of the Spirit with a man, after that. Chriſt ſaith to the drowſy ſinner, as he ſpake to the drowſy diſciples in the garden, *Sleep on now, and take your reſt.* So here, I called thee in ſuch a ſermon, but thou heardeſt not; by ſuch a providence, but thou obeyedſt not; ſleep on now and take thy reſt: "My "people would not hearken to my voice, and Iſrael would "none of me; ſo I gave them up to their own hearts luſt, to "walk in their own counſels," Pſal. lxxxi. 11, 12. *q. d.* I have done with them, the treaty is ended, I will make no more eſſays towards their converſion and ſalvation. *So I gave them up.* Methinks it ſounds as much as this, take them ſin, take them devil, I will have no more to do with him. So Hoſea iv. 17. "Ephraim is joined to idols, let him alone." His heart is glued faſt to ſin, he is enamoured upon other lovers, let him alone. O beloved, it is a dreadful thing for God to ſay, let this man alone in his formality, and that man in his carnal ſecurity. Let not this be miſapplied by poor, trembling ſouls under conviction: I know the fear of this judgment is upon their hearts, nothing makes them tremble more than leſt the day of grace be ended with them. But there is no ground for this fear, whilſt the Spirit continues convincing, and the ſoul trembling leſt his convictions ſhould prove ineffectual. Thus much of the nature, inſtruments, and manner of Chriſt's knocking at the door of a ſinner's heart. Our way is now opened to a fruitful application of this point, which I will wind up in divers neceſſary uſes.

I. *Uſe, for Information.*

And firſt, The point before us will be uſeful for information, in the following inferences, and deductions.

Infer. 1. *Into how deep a ſleep hath ſin caſt the ſouls of ſinners, that Chriſt muſt ſtand ſo long, and give ſuch loud repeated knocks, before it will awake and open to him?* There is the ſpirit of a deep ſleep fallen upon men, like that into which God caſt Adam; God ſpeaks once, yea, twice, but man re-

gards it not; it is the hardeſt thing in the world to rouze and awaken a man out of his carnal ſecurity. Look over *ſatan's* kingdom, and you ſhall find a general ſtilneſs, and quietneſs among his ſubjects; there is no trouble for ſin, no ſtrivings after ſalvation, no cryings out, "What ſhall we do to be ſaved?" Go into the crowds of carnal men and women, and you ſhall find them all intent and buſy about other matters. How long ſhall you be in their company, before you hear one groan for ſin, or ſee one tear ſlide from their eyes on that account? Oh! what a marvellous thing is here! do not their conſciences know the guilt that lies upon them? Are they not aware of a day of reckoning which approacheth? Yes, yes, theſe things are not hid from their conſciences: What art then is uſed to keep them ſo ſtill and quiet? Why, there are divers rattles to ſtill the conſciences of ſinners, and they do it effectually. There are four cauſes, and occaſions of this wonderful ſtilneſs in the ſouls of ſinners.

1. Ignorance of the nature of regenerating grace, taking that for regeneration, which is none of it; thus did the Jews, John viii. 25. confidently affirm God to be their God, and yet they did not know him. How many poor ignorant creatures think there is no need of any other work of regeneration, but what paſſed upon them in baptiſm? They were born, and baptized Chriſtians, and that is enough, they think, to ſave them. Matth. iii. 9. "We have Abraham to our father." They thought it ſufficient that Abraham's blood ran in their veins, though there were not a ſpark of Abraham's faith kindled in their ſouls: The Lord forgive the ſin of thoſe men that lead poor ſouls into ſuch fatal miſtakes. O if men were but aware of the neceſſity of a greater, and farther work to paſs upon their ſouls than their baptiſm, common powerleſs profeſſion, or the *ſimilar* works which appear upon formal hypocrites, heaven and earth would ring with their cries. But ignorance of the nature and neceſſity of ſpecial regenerating grace, like a doſe of *opium*, caſts the conſciences of many into this deep ſleep.

2. Freedom from groſſer ſins and pollutions of the world, ſtills and quiets the conſciences of thouſands; they have had a civil, ſober, and fair education; and though there be no grace and regeneration, yet what ſaints do they ſeem to themſelves, being adorned with ſobriety and civility! This ſtilled the conſcience of the Phariſee, Luke xviii. 11. "God, I thank "thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, "adulterers, or even as this publican." Thus, like delicate Agag, they ſpruce up themſelves with moral homilitical virtues,

wherein many thouſand Heathens were more gay than themſelves; but juſtice will hew them to-pieces as Agag was, for all their moral ornaments and endowments.

3. The ſtrict performance of the external duties of religion quiets the conſciences of many; they queſtion not but thoſe that do ſo well ſhall fare well, and that God will never damn men and women that keep their church, and ſay their prayers as they do. Thus the carnal Jews deluded themſelves, crying, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord:" As malefactors, in ſome of our neighbouring kingdoms, fly to the church from the hand of juſtice, ſo do theſe; but God will pluck them from the horns of the altar, and convince them that the empty name of religion is no ſecurity from damnation.

4. Many conſciences are ſtill and quieted in a natural ſinful ſtate, by miſinterpreting the voices of Providence; it may be God proſpers your earthly affairs, ſucceeds and ſmiles upon your undertakings; and this you conclude muſt be a token of his love and favour: But, alas! this is a great miſtake, the Lord give you better evidences of his love than theſe; for who proſper more in the world than wicked men? And who are more croſſed than the people of God? Read Job xxi. and Pſal. lxxiii. and compare both with Eccl. ix. 1. and you will quickly find the vanity of all hopes built upon ſuch a foundation.

However, by ſuch things as theſe are, the god of this world blinds the eyes of multitudes.

Infer. 2. *If every conviction be a knock of Chriſt, how deeply are all ſouls concerned in the ſucceſs and iſſue of them?*

Conviction is an *embryo* of the new creature; if it go out its full time, and come to a perfect new birth, it brings forth ſalvation to your ſouls; if it miſcarry finally, you are finally loſt. It is of infinite concernment therefore to every man and woman to be tender over thoſe convictions of their conſciences. It is true, conviction and converſion are two things; there may be conviction without converſion, though there can be no converſion without conviction. The bloſſoms upon the trees in the ſpring of the year cannot properly be called fruit, they are rather the rudiments of fruit, or ſomething in order to fruit: If they open kindly, and knit or ſet firmly, perfect fruit follows them; but if a blaſt or froſty morning kill them, no fruit is to be expected. Thus it is here, great care therefore ought to be taken about the preſervation and ſucceſs of convictions, both by

1. The ſoul itſelf that is under them.

2. And by all others that are concerned about them.

1. What care ſhould the ſoul itſelf have, upon whom con-

victions are wrought: have a care friends how you quench them, divert or hinder the operations of them, leſt you hinder as much as in you lies, the very conception of Chriſt in your ſouls by them. I remember it is ſaid, Exod. xxi. 22. "If men ſtrive and hurt a woman with child, and miſchief "follow, life ſhall be given for life." The life of your ſouls is bound up in the life of your convictions. I know it is hard for men and women to dwell with their own convictions; guilt and wrath are ſad ſubjects for mens thoughts to dwell upon; but yet it is far better to dwell with the thoughts of ſin and wrath here, than to lie ſweltering under them in hell for ever. You may be rid of your convictions and your ſalvation together; be not too eager after peace, a good trouble is better than a falſe peace. And on the other ſide, beware that your convictions and troubles turn not into diſcouragements to faith; this will croſs the proper intention of them: they are Chriſt's knocks for entrance, and were never intended to be bars or ſtumbling-blocks in your way to him; not ſtops, but ſteps in your way to Chriſt.

2. Let all others that are concerned about convincing ſouls, beware what counſels they give, and what rules they preſcribe, leſt they render them abortive, and deſtroy all in the bud. There are two errors too commonly committed, one in *exceſs*, perſuading ſouls under trouble of conſcience that there is no coming for them to Chriſt, unleſs they be ſo and ſo prepared, humbled juſt at ſuch a degree; this is dangerous counſel, it overheats the troubles of conſcience, and keeps the ſoul from its proper preſent duty and remedy. I am ſure Paul and Silas took no ſuch courſe with the convinced jaylor, nor Peter with the three thouſand wounded conſciences, Acts ii. Nor do I find where God hath ſtated the time and degree of ſpiritual troubles, ſo that there muſt be no addreſſes to Chriſt in the way of faith, until they have ſuffered them ſo long, and to ſuch an height: if they have imbittered ſin to the ſoul, and made it ſee the neceſſity of a Saviour, I think they cannot move too ſoon after Chriſt in the way of faith. Let no man ſet bounds where God ſets none.

There is another error committed *in defect*, when promiſes and comforts are preſently applied, before the nature of faith is known, or one act of recumbency put forth towards Chriſt: theſe haſty comforts come to nothing; they will not, they cannot ſtand. It is a dangerous thing to apply goſpel-cordials, and pour out the precious ointment of the promiſes upon

them that were never heart-sick for sin; when upon every slight trouble, which is but an early dew, the peculiar consolations of penitent and believing souls are hand over-head applied to them: how many such unskilful *empirics* are there in every place? such as the prophet Jeremy complains of, "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people "slightly, crying peace, peace, where there is no peace." Remember the foundation is now laying for eternity, and that is the time of deep consideration; men and women must ponder the terms, and count the cost, and deliberately accept and close with Christ, before the consolations of the promises can be regularly administred to them.

Infer. 3. *What a singular blessing is a rousing faithful ministry among the people?* By such a ministry Christ knocks powerfully; this is one of the greatest blessings God can bestow upon a people, next to the saving effects of it, when he sends among them powerful, judicious preachers of the gospel, under whose ministry their consciences cannot sleep quietly. These are the proper instruments Christ knocks at mens hearts by: and as for those prophets that sow pillows for drowsy sinners to sleep quietly upon, the Lord owns them not for his, Lam. ii. 14. "Thy prophets (not mine, but thine) have seen "vain and foolish things for thee, they have not discovered "thine iniquity."

It is true, those ministers that give men no rest nor quietness in their sins, must expect but little rest and quietness themselves. What is it for ministers to preach home to the consciences of others, but to pull down the rage of the world upon their heads? But certainly you will have cause to bless God to eternity, for casting your lot under such a ministry; and the Lord accounts such a mercy sufficient to recompense any outward affliction that lies upon you, Isa. xxx. 20. You fare richly under such doctrine, though the Lord should feed you with the bread of affliction, and give you the waters of adversity to drink; this makes amends for all, "Thine eyes shall "behold thy teachers, and they shall be driven no more into "corners." O blessed be God that England's corners are this day emptied, that its pulpits may be filled with laborious, faithful ministers. O that the knocks of Christ might this day be heard in all the cities, towns, and villages of this nation! the kingdom of God is come nigh unto us, this mercy is invaluable; pray that the Lord would continue it, and make all your ministers and means, whether more public or private, successful.

Infer. 4. *And then,* laſtly, *let all men beware of thoſe things that deafen their ears, and drown the ſound of Chriſt's knocks and calls in the goſpel.*

What pernicious enemies to the ſouls of men are thoſe perſons, and things, that turn away men's ears from attending to the knocks and calls of Chriſt in his word? Such are, (1.) Prophane, wicked men, who, like Elimas the ſorcerer, make it their buſineſs, by wicked inſinuations, flouts, and jeers, to turn away men's ears from the goſpel. Acts xiii. 10. "O "full of all ſubtilty, and all miſchief, thou child of the devil, "thou enemy of all righteouſneſs; wilt thou not ceaſe to "pervert the right ways of the Lord?" All oppoſition of godlineſs hath a ſpice of deviliſhneſs, and no child more reſembles his father, than a ſcoffing enemy reſembles his father, the devil. But bleſſed be God for that good providence which, in a great meaſure, hath ſtopt the mouths both of the father and his children, this day. (2.) Take heed of carnal, and ungodly relations, which diſcourage and threaten their choſen ſervants, and all that depend on them, from attending upon the means, or giving way to the convictions which God by them hath ſet upon their hearts. Cruel parents, who had rather ſee their children turned into their graves, than turning to the ways of ſerious godlineſs. O that any ſhould dare to quench the beginnings of ſpiritual life, in thoſe to whom they were inſtruments to convey natural life. (3.) Take heed of the world, its diſtracting cares, and charming pleaſures; what a din, what a confuſed buz, and noiſe, do theſe things make in the ears of men? Mark iv. 19. "The cares of this world "choak the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Tell not them of getting Chriſt, they muſt ſtudy how to get bread. Theſe are ſome of thoſe diſtracting and diverting ſounds, which drown the voice of Chriſt's knocks and calls in the goſpel. As you value your ſouls, beware of them.

II. *Uſe, for Exhortation.*

Chriſt is now come near us in the goſpel, "Behold he "ſtands at the door and knocks;" and I am here this day to demand your anſwer, and in his name I do ſolemnly demand it; what ſhall I return to him that ſent me? What ſayeſt thou, ſinner? Wilt thou open to Chriſt, or wilt thou ſhut him out; and with him thy own pardon, peace, and ſalvation? Once more let me try the force of a few more arguments upon your hearts, and refute your vain pleas to the contrary; methinks

no heart ſhould be able to reſiſt ſuch motives, and rational perſuaſions, as theſe following will be found to be.

Motive 1. You are in extream need of Chriſt, you want him more than bread, or breath; many things are convenient for your bodies, but Chriſt is the one thing neceſſary for your ſouls. Luke x. 9. "One thing is neceſſary." Neceſſity is an engine that will open any thing in the world that can be opened; neceſſity will make all fly before it. Now there is a plain, preſent, abſolute neceſſity lying upon every one of you to open your hearts to Chriſt, and that without delay: Neceſſity goes before the face of Chriſt, to open the way for him into the heart; thou muſt have him, or be loſt for ever. Chriſt and faith are not among the *may bees*, but the *muſt bees*, to the happineſs of thy ſoul. A man may be poor, and happy; reproached, and bleſſed; but he cannot be chriſtleſs, and ſafe; nor chriſtleſs and comfortable: you muſt have Chriſt, or you cannot have life, John iii. 36. you muſt have Chriſt, or you can have no hope, Col. i. 27. Chriſt and life, Chriſt and hope, go together: No Chriſt, no life; no Chriſt, no hope: Sinner, thou muſt have Chriſt, or thou canſt have no pardon; for Chriſt and pardon are undivided, Eph. i. 7. In a word, you muſt have Chriſt, or you can have no ſalvation, Acts iv. 12. Well, then, if thou canſt have no life nor hope, no pardon nor ſalvation without Chriſt; then a plain neceſſity goes before Chriſt, to open his way into thine heart: methinks, thou ſhouldſt now ſay, then will I open to Chriſt whatever the terms be. Come ſufferings, loſſes, reproaches, yea, death itſelf, all is one; Chriſt I muſt have, and Chriſt I will have; neceſſity is laid upon me, and my heart is opened to Chriſt by it: woe to me for ever if I miſs of Chriſt.

Motive 2. The Lord Jeſus is this day come nigh to every one of your ſouls. I may ſay to you as Chriſt did to them, Luke x. 9. "The kingdom of God is come nigh unto you." The Lord grant he be not as nigh to ſome of you as ever he ſhall be; for he muſt come nearer, or elſe you are loſt for ever. It is not Chriſt among you in the means of grace, but Chriſt within you by the work of grace, which muſt be unto you the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. He is not only among you in reſpect of external means, but he is come into your underſtandings and conſciences; yea, ſome motions of his you may feel upon your affections, there wants but a little more to make you eternally happy. O what would one effectual touch upon your wills be worth now! the head-work is done, but O that the heart-work were done too. You are *almoſt ſaved*, but to be

almost saved, is to be wholly, and eternally lost, if it go no further. It is a sad thing for a man that hath one foot in heaven to slide from thence into hell; it is sad to be shipwrecked at the harbour's mouth.

Motive 3. Jesus Christ hath unquestionable right to enter into, and possess every one of your souls: Satan is but an usurper: Christ is your lawful owner and proprietor; thy soul, sinner, hath not so full a title to thy body, as Christ hath to thy soul: Satan keeps Christ out of his right. Christ knocks at the door of his own house; he built it, and therefore may well claim admission into it; it is his own creature. Col. i. 16. "By him were all things made, whether they be visible, or invisible;" bodies or souls. The invisible part, thy soul, is his workmanship, a stately structure of his own raising. He hath also a right by redemption, Christ hath bought thy soul, and that at the invaluable price of his own blood. Who then can dispute the right of Christ to enter into his own house? But alas! he cometh to his own, but his own receive him not.

Motive 4. Open the door to Christ, for a train of blessings and mercies come in with him; a troop of privileges follow him. In the same day and hour that Christ comes into thine heart, by a full consent and deliberate choice, a pardon comes with him of all the sins that ever thou committedst in thought, word, or action. Will such a pardon be welcome to thy soul? Then let Christ be welcome, Eph. i. 7. for where Christ comes, pardon comes. If you open to Christ, you open to peace, and who would shut the door of his soul against peace? If peace be welcome, let Christ be welcome; for peace follows faith in Christ, Rom. v. 1. Where Christ comes, liberty comes, John viii. 36. "If the Son therefore make you free, then are you "free indeed." Are you in love with bonds and fetters? Satan's laws are written in blood. Christ's yoke is easy, and his commands not grievous. If you love liberty, love Christ. In a word, where Christ comes, salvation comes; "for he is the "author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him." If therefore you love pardon, peace, liberty, and salvation, shut not the door against Christ; for all these follow him wherever he goes.

Motive 5. Christ this day solemnly demands entrance into thy soul; he begs thee to open to him, 2 Cor. v. 20. he commands thee to open unto him, 1 John iii. 23. He denounceth eternal damnation to those that refuse him entrance. Now consider well, here is entrance demanded under pain of the eternal wrath of God: This demand is filled and recorded in

heaven; at your own peril be it if you ſhut the door againſt him: Only thus will I ſay in my Redeemer's behalf, if you refuſe, bear witneſs, heaven and earth this day, that Chriſt ſolemnly demanded entrance into thy ſoul, and was refuſed; bear witneſs, that the door was ſhut againſt the only Redeemer, who intreated, commanded, and threatned eternal damnation to the rejecters of him. Oh, methinks, that ſcripture, Prov. i. 24, 25. is able to ſtrike terror into the very center of that ſoul that refuſes the offers of Chriſt!

Motive 6. And ſo I have done my maſter's errand; if you now refuſe the knock of Chriſt at your hearts, he may never knock more; and where are you then? There is a knock which will be the laſt knock, a call which will be his laſt call; and after that no more knocks or calls, but an eternal ſilence as to any overture of mercy or grace.

Object. 1. *But if I do open to Chriſt, he will never come in to ſuch a filthy polluted ſinful ſoul as mine is.*

Anſw. Who ſaith ſo? Who dare affirm ſo impudent a falſehood in the very face of the text? "If any man open to me, I "will come in to him."

Object. 2. *If I open to Chriſt, I muſt bid farewel to eaſe and reſt in this world: reproaches, ſufferings, loſſes follow him.*

Anſw. If Chriſt, pardon, and ſalvation, be not worth the enduring and ſuffering theſe ſmall things, ſure thou valueſt Chriſt and thy ſoul at a low rate. O who can ſufficiently bewail the ignorance, and folly of unbelievers, that will ſell their ſouls and hopes of heaven for ſuch trifles! And if Chriſt and thy ſoul muſt part upon theſe terms, then hear me, ſinner, and let it ſink into thine heart; thy damnation will be both,

1. Juſt and righteous.
2. Unavoidable and ſure.

1. Thy damnation will be juſt; for thou hadſt thy own choice, and deliberately preferredſt the inſignificant trifles of this world before Chriſt and ſalvation. It was plainly told thee what the iſſue of thy rejecting Chriſt would be; and yet, after ſufficient warning, thou adventuredſt upon it: Whatever other ſinners will plead, I know not, but as for thee thou muſt be ſpeechleſs, Matth. xxii. 12. If thou die chriſtleſs, thou muſt appear at his bar ſpeechleſs; and the day of judgment will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Rom. ii. 5.

2. It will alſo be unavoidable, for there is no other way to ſalvation but this, Acts iv. 12. No Chriſt, no heaven; no faith,

no Chriſt: "How ſhall we eſcape, if we neglect ſo great a ſal-"vation?" Heb. ii. 3. Mercy itſelf cannot ſave thee out of Chriſt, for all the ſaving mercy of God is diſpenſed to men through him, Jude 21. It is to no purpoſe to cry mercy, Lord, mercy! when Chriſt, in whom all the mercies of God are diſpenſed to men, is rejected by thee.

III. *Uſe, for conſolation.*

This point winds up in conſolation to all ſuch, as, hearing the knocks of Chriſt, have opened, or are now reſolved to open their hearts unto him; and that nothing henceforth ſhall keep Chriſt and their ſouls aſunder: To ſuch I ſhall addreſs the following grounds of comfort.

Conſolation 1. An opening heart to Chriſt is a work wholly and altogether ſupernatural; a ſpecial work of the ſpirit of God, never found upon any but an elect ſoul. There are common gifts of the ſpirit, ſuch as knowledge, vaniſhing convictions, *&c.* but the opening of the heart by faith is the ſpecial, ſaving, and peculiar work of the ſpirit, John vi. 29. "This "is the work of God, that ye believe." Yea, it is the effect of the Almighty power of God, the exceeding greatneſs of his power is exerted in the work of faith, Eph. i. 19. It riſes not out of nature, as common gifts do; but of this it is expreſly ſaid, Eph. ii. 8. "It is not of yourſelves, it is the gift of God." Where this work is effectually wrought, we may reaſon ſo ſolidly, as comfortably from it, both backward, to the electing love of God, and forward, to our eternal glorification with him, Rom. viii. 30.

Conſolat. 2. The opening of thy heart to Chriſt by ſaving faith, gives thee intereſt in Chriſt the very ſame hour; the relation is then conſtituted, the conjugal tie or bond is faſtned betwixt him and thy ſoul; John i. 12. "To as many as received him, "to them gave he power, (*viz.* right or priviledge) to become "the Sons of God, even to as many as believed on his name." You neither need, nor may expect an extraordinary meſſenger or voice from heaven to tell you that Chriſt is yours, and you are his; you have a better foundation in this word and work of faith: For my part, if God will give me the clear and ſatisfying experience of this work upon my heart, I would never deſire more ſatisfaction on this ſide heaven. I know not but the devil may counterfeit an extraordinary voice, and cheat the ſoul by a lying oracle; but if I really feel my heart and will ſincerely opening to Chriſt upon goſpel-terms, I am ſure there is no deceit in that.

Conſolat. 3. The opening of thy heart to Chriſt by faith, is